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Letters
of
Sri Aurobindo
(Second Series)



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LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

FOREWORD

This second series of Sri Aurobindo's letters is intended to be complementary to the volume published on his 75th birthday—the 15th August, 1947. It is a further instalment from the vast store of his letters which yet remain to be published. Some idea of their immense quantity can be had from the fact that regularly for six to eight hours every day over a period of about ten years he gave replies to the innumerable inquiries addressed to him by the spiritual aspirants in his Ashram and elsewhere. The letters included in the first volume were selected with a view to giving a broad outline of the basic principles of his spiritual metaphysics and psychology and his system of Integral Yoga. The letters in the present volume are compiled so as to throw a closer light and give a somewhat more intimate insight into the various aspects of the dynamic development of the spiritual practice enunciated by him. And as this practice aims not only at a liberation from the chains of Ignorance that bind our life but also at a decisive spiritual conquest and transmutation of that Ignorance, resulting in the complete divinisation of our entire existence, the manifold problems of human life also come up at many places for illuminating elucidation from the central spiritual vision, besides the questions directly

connected with Yoga and arising in the course of the difficult journey on the spiritual path. For this reason it is expected that this book will prove of great value not only to all spiritual seekers in need of guidance and help in their endeavour, but also to those who are eager to comprehend the true significance of the enigmatic complexities of human existence and their final issue.

The names of the persons to whom these letters were addressed have all been omitted following the direction given by Sri Aurobindo himself in a letter: "Coupled with a reference to names what is written raises needless criticism and controversy while the same thing put impersonally is better received and more easily accepted."

November 24, 1948 .

K. H. G.

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SECTION ONE

SYNTHETIC METHOD
AND
INTEGRAL YOGA

The Central Aim

I DO not agree with the view that the world is an illusion, *mithya*. The Brahman is here as well as in the supracosmic Absolute. The thing to be overcome is the Ignorance which makes us blind and prevents us from realising Brahman in the world as well as beyond it and the true nature of existence.

12-4-1936

The Object of Integral Yoga

THE object of the Yoga is to enter into and be possessed by the Divine Presence and Consciousness, to love the Divine for the Divine's sake alone, to be tuned in our nature into the nature of the Divine, and in our will and works and life to be the instrument of the Divine. Its object is not to be a great Yogi or a Superman (although that may come) or to grab at the Divine for the sake of the ego's power,

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pride or pleasure. It is not for Moksha, though liberation comes by it and all else may come, but these must not be our objects. The Divine alone is our object.

Inclusive Method of Integral Yoga

As regards S's question—this is not a Yoga of Bhakti alone; it is or at least it claims to be an integral Yoga, that is, a turning of all the being in all its parts to the Divine. It follows that there must be knowledge and works as well as Bhakti, and in addition, it includes a total change of the nature, a seeking for perfection, so that the nature also may become one with the nature of the Divine. It is not only the heart that has to turn to the Divine and change, but the mind also—so knowledge is necessary and the will and power of action and creation also—so works too are necessary. In this Yoga the methods of other Yogas are taken up—like this of Purusha-Prakriti, but with a difference in the final object. Purusha separates from Prakriti, not in order to abandon her, but in order to know himself and her and to be no longer her plaything, but the knower, lord and upholder of the nature; but having

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become so or even in becoming so, one offers all that to the Divine. One may begin with knowledge or with works or with Bhakti or with Tapasya of self-purification for perfection (change of nature) and develop the rest as a subsequent movement or one may combine all in one movement. There is no single rule for all, it depends on the personality and the nature. Surrender is the main power of the Yoga, but the surrender is bound to be progressive; a complete surrender is not possible in the beginning, but only a will in the being for that completeness,—in fact it takes time; yet it is only when the surrender is complete that the full flood of the sadhana is possible. Till then there must be the personal effort with an increasing reality of surrender. One calls in the power of the Divine Shakti and once that begins to come into the being, it at first supports the personal endeavour, then progressively takes up the whole action, although the consent of the sadhak continues to be always necessary. As the Force works, it brings in the different processes that are necessary for the sadhak, processes of knowledge, of Bhakti, of spiritualised action, of transformation of the nature. The idea that they cannot be combined is an error.

30-8-1937

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Necessity of Yoga in Action

THE object of the sadhana is opening of the consciousness to the Divine and the change of the nature. Meditation or contemplation is one means to this but only one means; bhakti is another; work is another. Chitta-shuddhi was preached by the Yogins as a first means towards realisation and they got by it the saintliness of the saint and the quietude of the sage but the transformation of the nature of which we speak is something more than that, and this transformation does not come by contemplation alone; works are necessary, Yoga in action is indispensable.

13-10-1934

Place of Works in Integral Yoga

I HAVE never disputed the truth of the old Yogas—I have myself had the experience of Vaishnava Bhakti and of Nirvana in the Brahman; I recognise their truth in their own field and for their own purpose—the truth of their experience so far as it goes—though I am in no way bound to accept the

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truth of the mental philosophies founded on the experience. I similarly find that my Yoga is true in its own field—a larger field, as I think—and for its own purpose. The purpose of the old is to get away from life to the Divine—so obviously, let us drop Karma. The purpose of the new is to reach the Divine and bring the fullness of what is gained into life—for that, Yoga by works is indispensable. It seems to me that there is no mystery about that or anything to perplex anybody—it is rational and inevitable. Only you say that the thing is impossible; but that is what is said about everything before it is done.

I may point out that Karmayoga is not a new but a very old Yoga; the Gita was not written yesterday and Karmayoga existed before the Gita. Your idea that the only justification in the Gita for works is that it is all an unavoidable nuisance, so better make the best use of it, is rather summary and crude. If that were all, the Gita would be the production of an imbecile and I would hardly have been justified in writing two volumes on it or the world in reading it as one of the greatest scriptures, especially for its treatment of the place of works in spiritual endeavour. There is surely more in it than that. Anyhow, your doubts whether works can lead to realisation or rather your flat and sweeping denial of the

possibility contradicts the experience of those who have achieved this supposed impossibility. You say that work lowers the consciousness, brings you out of the inner into the outer—yes, if you consent to externalise yourself in it instead of doing works from within; but that is what one has to learn not to do. Thought and feeling also can externalise one in the same way; but it is a question of linking thought, feeling and act firmly to the inner consciousness by living there and making the rest an instrument. Difficult? Even Bhakti is not easy and Nirvana for most men more difficult than that.

I do not know why you drag in humanitarianism, activism, philanthropical *sewa*, etc. None of these are part of my Yoga or in harmony with my works, so they don't touch me. I never thought that politics or feeding the poor or writing beautiful poems would lead straight to Vaikuntha or the Absolute. If it were so, Romesh Dutt on one side and Baudelaire on the other would be the first to attain the Highest and welcome us there. It is not the form of the work itself or mere activity but the consciousness and Godward will behind it that are the essence of Karmayoga; the work is only the necessary instrumentation for the union with the Master of works, the transit to the pure will and power of Light from the will and power of the Ignorance.

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Finally, why suppose that I am against meditation or bhakti? I have not the slightest objection to your taking either or both as the means of approach to the Divine. Only I saw no reason why anyone should fall foul of works and deny the truth of those who have reached, as the Gita says, through works perfect realisation and oneness of nature with the Divine, *samsiddhim sadharmyam* (as did Janaka and others)—simply because he himself cannot find or has not yet found their deeper secret—hence my defence of works.

23-12-1934

Works and Meditation

(1)

THE including of the outer consciousness in the transformation is of supreme importance in this Yoga—meditation cannot do it. Meditation can deal only with the inner being. So work is of primary importance—only it must be done with the right attitude and in the right consciousness, then it is as fruitful as any meditation can be.

Works and Meditation

(2)

WORK by itself is only a preparation, so is meditation by itself, but work done in the increasing Yogic consciousness is a means of realisation as much as meditation is. . . . I have not said, I hope, that work *only* prepares. Meditation also prepares for the direct contact. If we are to do work only as a preparation and then become motionless meditative ascetics, then all my spiritual teaching is false and there is no use for Supramental realisation or anything else that has not been done in the past. . . .

The ignorance underlying this attitude is in the assumption that one must necessarily do only work or only meditation. Either work is the means or meditation is the means, but both cannot be! I have never said, so far as I know, that meditation should not be done. To set up an open competition or a closed one between work and meditation is a trick of the dividing mind and belongs to the old Yoga. Please remember that I have been declaring all along an integral Yoga in which Knowledge, Bhakti, Works—light of consciousness, Ananda and love, will and power in works—meditation, adoration, service of the Divine have all their place.

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Meditation is not greater than Yoga of works nor works greater than Yoga by knowledge—both are equal.

Another thing—it is a mistake to argue from one's own very limited experience, ignoring that of others and build on it large generalisations about Yoga. This is what many do, but the method has obvious demerits. You have no experience of major realisations through works, and you conclude that such realisations are impossible. But what of the many who have had them—elsewhere and here too in the Ashram?

Don't conclude however that I am exalting works as the sole means of realisation. I am only giving it its due place.

19-12-1934

Prayer and Meditation

PRAYER and meditation count for so much in Yoga. But the prayer must well up from the heart on a crest of emotion or aspiration, the Japa or meditation come in a live push carrying the joy or the light of the thing in it. If done mechanically and merely as a thing that ought to be done (stern grim duty!), it

must tend towards want of interest and dryness and so be ineffective. . . . You were doing Japa too much as a means for bringing about a result, I meant too much as a device, a process laid down for getting the thing done. That was why I wanted the psychological conditions in you to develop, the psychic, the mental, for when the psychic is forward, there is no lack of life and joy in the prayer, the aspiration, the seeking, no difficulty in having the constant stream of bhakti and when the mind is quiet and intuned and upturned there is no difficulty or want of interest in meditation. Meditation, by the way, is a process leading towards knowledge and through knowledge, it is a thing of the head and not of the heart, so if you want *dhyana*, you can't have an aversion to knowledge. Concentration in the heart is not meditation, it is a call on the Divine, on the Beloved. This Yôga too is not a Yôga of knowledge alone, knowledge is one of its means, but its base being self-offering, surrender, bhakti, it is based in the heart and nothing can be eventually done without this base. There are plenty of people here who do or have done Japa and base themselves on bhakti, very few comparatively who have done the "head" meditation; love and bhakti and works are usually the base; how many can proceed by knowledge? Only the few.

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Three Approaches to the Divine

MEDITATION is one means of approach to the Divine and a great way, but it cannot be called a short cut—for most it is a long and most difficult though a very high ascent. It can by no means be short unless it brings a descent, and even then it is only a foundation that is quickly laid; afterwards meditation has to build laboriously a big superstructure on that foundation. It is very indispensable but there is nothing of the short about it.

Karma is a much simpler road provided one's mind is not fixed on the Karma to the exclusion of the Divine. The aim must be the Divine and the work can only be a means. The use of poetry etc. is to keep one in contact with one's inner being and that helps to prepare for the direct contact with the inmost, but one must not stop with that, one must go on to the real thing. If one thinks of being a literary man or a poet or a painter as things worth while for their own sake, then it is no longer the Yogic spirit. That is why I have sometimes to say that our business is to be Yogis, not merely poets, painters, etc.

Love, bhakti, surrender, the psychic opening are the only short cuts to the Divine—or can be; for if the love and bhakti are too vital, then there is likely

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to be a seesaw between ecstatic expectation and viraha, abhiman, despair, etc., which makes not a short cut but a long one, a zigzag—not a straight flight—a whirling round one's own ego instead of a running towards the Divine.

Three Ways of Sadhana

I WAS quite in earnest in speaking of the progress you had made by the psychic movement and the endeavour to detect and remove the ego. I had already written to you strongly approving of that way. It is in our Yoga the way to devotion and surrender—for it is the psychic movement that brings the constant and pure devotion and the removal of ego that makes it possible to surrender. The two things indeed go together.

The other way, which is the way to knowledge, is the meditation in the head by which there comes the opening above, the quietude or silence of the mind and the descent of peace, etc. of the higher consciousness generally till it envelops the being and fills the body and begins to take up all the movements. But this involves a passage through silence, a certain emptiness of the ordinary activities—they being

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pushed out and done as a purely superficial action—and you strongly dislike silence and emptiness.

The third way which is one of the two ways towards Yoga by works is the separation of the Purusha from the Prakriti, the inner silent being from the outer active one, so that one has two consciousnesses or a double consciousness, one behind watching and observing and finally controlling and changing the other which is active in front. But this also means living in an inner peace and silence and dealing with the activities as if they were a thing of the surface. The other way of beginning the Yoga of works is by doing them for the Divine, for the Mother, and not for oneself, consecrating and dedicating them till one concretely feels the Divine Force taking up the activities and doing them for one.

If there is any secret or key of my Yoga which you say you have not found, it lies in these methods—and, in reality, there is nothing so mysterious, impossible or even new about them in themselves. It is only the farther development at a later stage and the aim of the Yoga that are new. But that one need not concern oneself with in the earlier stages unless one wishes to do so as a matter of mental knowledge.

11-9-1935

Three Supports of Yoga

I HAVE always said that work done as sadhana—done, that is to say, as an outflow of energy from the Divine and offered to the Divine or work done for the sake of the Divine or work done in a spirit of devotion is a powerful means of sadhana and that such work is especially necessary in this Yoga. Work, bhakti and meditation are the three supports of Yoga. One can do with all three or two or one. There are people who can't meditate in the set way that one calls meditation, but they progress through work or through bhakti or through the two together. By work and bhakti one can develop a consciousness in which eventually a natural meditation and realisation becomes possible.

All that is quite different from N's idea of making oneself virtuous and self-controlled and pure by some mysterious innate power in the pursuit of literature. If he had asked me the question about work and sadhana, I would have answered him otherwise. Of course literature and art are or can be a first introduction to the inner being—the inner mind, inner vital; for it is from there that they come. And if one writes poems of bhakti, poems of divine seeking, etc. or creates music of that kind, it means that there is a bhakta or seeker inside who is

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supporting himself by that self-expression. But it was not from any point of view like that that N put his question and it was not from that point of view that I gave my answer. It was about some especial character-making virtue that he seemed to attribute to literature.

18-11-1936

The Central Need

It is altogether unprofitable to enquire who or what class will arrive first or last at the goal. The spiritual path is not a field of competition or a race that this should matter. What matters is one's own aspiration for the Divine, one's own faith, surrender, selfless self-giving. Others can be left to the Divine who will lead each according to his nature. Meditation, work, bhakti are each means of preparative help towards fulfilment; all are included in this path. If one can dedicate oneself through work, that is one of the most powerful means towards the self-giving which is itself the most powerful and indispensable element of the sadhana.

To cleave to the path means to follow it without

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leaving it or turning aside. It is a path of self-offering of the whole being in all its parts, the offering of the thinking mind and the heart, the will and actions, the inner and the outer instruments so that one may arrive at the experience of the Divine, the Presence within, the psychic and spiritual change. The more one gives of oneself in all ways, the better for the sadhana. But all cannot do it to the same extent, with the same rapidity, in the same way. How others do it or fail to do it should not be one's concern—how to do it faithfully oneself is the one thing important.

8-8-1936

SECTION TWO
INTEGRAL YOGA
AND
OTHER SPIRITUAL PATHS

Vedanta, Tantra and Integral Yoga

VEDA and Vedanta are one side of the One Truth; Tantra with its emphasis on Shakti is another; in this Yoga all sides of the Truth are taken up, not in the systematic forms given them formerly but in their essence, and carried to the fullest and highest significance. But Vedanta deals more with the principles and essentials of the divine knowledge and therefore much of its spiritual knowledge and experience has been taken bodily into the *Arya**. Tantra deals more with forms and processes and organised powers—all these could not be taken as they were, for the integral Yoga needs to develop its own forms and processes, but the ascent of the consciousness through the centres and other Tantric knowledge are there behind the process of transformation to which so much importance is given by me—also the truth that nothing can be done except through the force of the Mother.

The process of the Kundalini awakened rising

* A philosophical journal conducted by Sri Aurobindo during the years 1914-21

through the centres as also the purification of the centres is a Tantric knowledge. In our Yoga there is no willed process of the purification and opening of the centres, no raising up of the Kundalini by a set process either. Another method is used, but still there is the ascent of the consciousness from and through the different levels to join the higher consciousness above; there is the opening of the centres and of the planes (mental, vital, physical) which these centres command; there is also the descent which is the main key of the spiritual transformation. Therefore, there is, I have said, a Tantric knowledge behind the process of transformation in this Yoga.

14th3-1937

Movement of Force in Tantra and Integral Yoga

THE ascension and descent of the Force in this Yoga accomplishes itself in its own way without any necessary reproduction of the details laid down in the Tantric books. Many become conscious of the centres, but others simply feel the ascent or descent in a general way or from level to level rather

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than from centre to centre, that is, they feel the Force descending first to the head, then to the heart, then to the navel and still below. It is not at all necessary to become aware of the deities in the centres according to the Tantric description, but some feel the Mother in the different centres. In these things our sadhana does not cleave to the knowledge given in the books, but only keeps to the central truth behind and realises it independently without any subjection to the old forms and symbols. The centres themselves have a different interpretation here from that given in the books of the Tantrics.

26-4-1936

The Divine Mother in the Gita, Tantra and Integral Yoga

THE Gita does not speak expressly of the Divine Mother; it speaks always of surrender to the Purushottama—it mentions her only as the Para Prakriti who becomes the Jiva, that is, who manifests the Divine in the multiplicity and through whom all these worlds are created by the Supreme and he

himself descends as the Avatar. The Gita follows the Vedantic tradition which leans entirely on the Ishwara aspect of the Divine and speaks little of the Divine Mother because its object is to draw back from world-nature and arrive at the supreme realisation beyond it; the Tantric tradition leans on the Shakti or Ishwari aspect and makes all depend on the Divine Mother because its object is to possess and dominate the world-nature and arrive at the supreme realisation through it. This Yoga insists on both the aspects; the surrender to the Divine Mother is essential, for without it there is no fulfilment of the object of the Yoga.

In regard to the Purushottama the Divine Mother is the supreme divine Consciousness and Power above the worlds, Adya Shakti; she carries the Supreme in herself and manifests the Divine in the worlds through the Akshara and Kshara. In regard to the Akshara she is the same Para Shakti holding the Purusha immobile in herself and also herself immobile in him at the back of all creation. In regard to the Kshara she is the mobile cosmic Energy manifesting all beings and forces.

19-8-1932

INTEGRAL YOGA AND OTHER SPIRITUAL PATHS

Occult Powers and Divine Forces in Yoga

YES, the object of our Yoga is to establish direct contact with the Divine above and bring down the divine Consciousness from above into all the centres. Occult powers belonging to the mental, vital and subtle physical planes are not our object. One can have contact with various Divine Forces and Personalities on the way, but there is no need to establish them in the centres, though sometimes that happens automatically (as with the four Personalities of the Mother) for a time in the course of the sadhana. But it is not a rule to do so. Our Yoga is meant to be plastic and to allow all necessary workings of the Divine Power according to the nature, but these in their details may vary with each individual.

29-5-1936

Occult Experiences and Spiritual Realisation

ORDINARILY, all the more inward and all the abnormal psychological experiences are called psychic. I use the word psychic for the soul as

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distinguished from the mind and vital. All movements and experiences of the soul would in that sense be called psychic, those which rise from or directly touch the psychic being; where mind and vital predominate, the experience would be called psychological (surface or occult). "Spiritual" has not a necessary connection with the Absolute. Of course the experience of the Absolute is spiritual. All contacts with self, the higher consciousness, the Divine above are spiritual. There are others that could not be so sharply classified or one set off against another.

The spiritual realisation is of primary importance and indispensable. I would consider it best to have the spiritual and psychic development first and have it with the same fullness before entering the occult regions. Those who enter the latter first may find their spiritual realisation much delayed—others fall into the mazy traps of the occult and do not come out in this life. Some no doubt can carry on both together, the occult and the spiritual, and make them help each other; but the process I suggest is the safer.

The governing factors for us must be the spirit and the psychic being united with the Divine—the occult laws and phenomena have to be known but only as an instrumentation, not as the governing principles. The occult is a vast field and complicated

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and not without its dangers. It need not be abandoned but it should not be given the first place.

Incarnation and Supramental Realisation

IN the Veda there is no idea or experience of a personal emanation or incarnation of any of the Vedic gods. When the Rishis speak of Indra or Agni or Soma in men, they are speaking of the god in his cosmic presence, power or function. This is evident from the very language when they speak of Agni as the immortal in mortals, the immortal Light in men, the inner Warrior, the Guest in human beings. It is the same with Indra or Soma. The building of the gods in man means a creation of the divine Powers—Indra the Power of the Light, Soma the Power of the Ananda—in the human nature.

No doubt, the Rishis felt the actual presence of the gods above, near, around or in them, but this was a common experience of all, not special and personal, not an emanation or incarnation. One may see or feel the presence of the Divine or a divine Power above the head or in the heart or in any or all the centres, feel the presence, see the form

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living there; one may be governed in all one's actions, thoughts, and feelings by it; one may lose one's separate personality in it, may identify and merge. But all that does not constitute an incarnation or emanation of the Divine or of the Power. These things are universal experiences to which any Yogin may arrive; to reach this condition with relation to the Divine is indeed a common object of Yoga.

. An incarnation is something more, something special and individual to the individual being. It is the substitution of the Person of a divine being for the human person and an infiltration of it into all the movements so that there is a dynamic personal change in all of them and in the whole nature; not merely a change of the character of the consciousness or general surrender into its hands, but a subtle intimate personal change. Even when there is an incarnation from the birth, the human elements have to be taken up, but when there is a descent, there is a total conscious substitution.

This is a long, subtle and persistent process. The incarnating Person first overshadows as an influence, then enters into the centres one after the other, sometimes in the same form, sometimes in different forms, then takes up all the nature and its actions. What you describe does not correspond to this

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process; it seems to be an endeavour to build the gods in yourself in the Vedic sense and the Vedic manner. That can bring, if it succeeds, their powers and a sense of their presence; it cannot bring about an incarnation. An incarnation is destined, is chosen for you; the human person cannot choose or create an incarnation for himself by his own personal will. To attempt it is to invite a spiritual disaster.

One thing must be said—that an incarnation is not the object of this Yoga; it is only a condition or means towards the object. The one and the only aim we have before us is to bring down the supramental Consciousness and the supramental Truth into the world; the Truth and nothing but the Truth is our aim, and if we cannot embody this Truth, a hundred incarnations do not matter. But to bring down the true Supramental, to escape from all mental mixture is not an easy matter. The mere descent of the suns into the centres, even of all the seven suns into all the seven centres is only the seed; it is not the thing itself done and finished. One may feel the descent of the suns, one may have the attempt, the beginning of an incarnation, and yet in the end one may fail, if there is a flaw in the nature or a failure to pass through all the ordeals and satisfy all the hard conditions of the perfect

spiritual success. Not only the whole mental, vital and physical nature of the ignorant human being has to be overcome and transformed, but also the three states of mental consciousness which intervene between the human and the supramental and like all mind are capable of admitting great and capital errors. Till then there may be descents of the supramental influence, light, power, Ananda, but the supramental Truth cannot be possessed, organised, put in possession of the whole nature. One must not think before that that one possesses the Supermind, for that is a delusion which would prevent the fulfilment.

One thing more. The more intense the experiences that come, the higher the forces that descend, the greater become the possibilities of deviation and error. For the very intensity and the very height of the force excites and aggrandises the movements of the lower nature and raises up in it all opposing elements in their full force, but often in the disguise of truth, wearing a mask of plausible justification. There is needed a great patience, calm, sobriety, balance, an impersonal detachment and sincerity free from all taint of ego or personal human desire. There must be no attachment to any idea of one's own, to any experience, to any kind of imagination, mental building or vital demand; the light of

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discrimination must always play to detect those things, however fair or plausible they may seem. Otherwise, the Truth will have no chance of establishing itself in its purity in the nature.

4-7-1927

Nirvana and Beyond

IN our Yoga the Nirvana is the beginning of the higher Truth, as it is the passage from the Ignorance to the higher Truth. The Ignorance has to be extinguished in order that the Truth may manifest.

Nirvana and Integral Realisation

I DON'T think I have written, but I said once that souls which have passed into Nirvana may (not "must") return to complete the larger upward curve. I have written somewhere, I think, that for this Yoga (it might also be added, in the natural complete order of the manifestation) the experience of Nirvana can only be a stage or passage to the complete

realisation. I have said also that there are many doors by which one can pass into the realisation of the Absolute (Parabrahman), and Nirvana is one of them, but by no means the only one. You may remember Ramakrishna's saying that the Jivakoti can ascend the stairs, but not return, while the Ishwarakoti can ascend and descend at will. If that is so, the Jivakoti might be those who describe only the curve from Matter through Mind into the silent Brahman and the Ishwarakoti those who get to the integral Reality and can therefore combine the Ascent with the Descent and contain the "two ends" of existence in their single being.

2-11-1942

*Buddha & Vedanta:
Buddha's Attitude to Life*

IF Buddha really combatted and denied all Vedantic conceptions of the Self, then it can be no longer true that Buddha refrained from all metaphysical speculations or distinct pronouncements as to the nature of the ultimate Reality. The view you take of his conception of Nirvana seems to concur with the

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Mahayanist interpretation and its conception of the Permanent, *dhruvam*, which could be objected to as a later development like the opposite Nihilistic conception of the Shunyam. What Buddha very certainly taught was that the world is not-Self and that the individual has no true existence since what does exist in the world is a stream of impermanent consciousness from moment to moment and the individual person is fictitiously constituted by a bundle of *sanskaras* and can be dissolved by dissolving the bundle. This is in conformity with the Vedantic Monistic view that there is no true separate individual. As to the other Vedantic view of the one Self, impersonal and universal and transcendent, it does not seem that Buddha made any distinct and unmistakable pronouncement on abstract and metaphysical questions; but if the world or all in the world is not-Self, *anatman*, there can be no more room for a universal Self, only at most for a transcendent Real Being. His conception of Nirvana was of something transcendent of the universe, but he did not define what it was because he was not concerned with any abstract metaphysical speculations about the Reality; he must have thought them unnecessary and irrelevant, and any indulgence in them likely to divert from the true object. His explanation of things was psychological and not metaphysical and

his methods were all psychological,—the breaking up of the false associations of consciousness which cause the continuance of desire and suffering, so getting rid of the stream of birth and death in a purely phenomenal (not unreal) world; the method of life by which this liberation could be effected was also a psychological method, the eightfold path developing right understanding and right action. His object was pragmatic and severely practical and so were his methods; metaphysical speculations would only draw the mind away from the one thing needful.

As to Buddha's attitude towards life, I do not quite see how "service to mankind" or any ideal of improvement of the world-existence can have been part of his aim, since to pass out of life into a transcendence was his object. His eightfold path was the means towards that end and not an aim in itself or indeed in any way an aim. Obviously, if right understanding and right action become the common rule of life, there would be a great improvement in the world, but for Buddha's purpose that could be an incidental result and not at all part of his central object. You say, "Buddha himself urged the necessity to serve mankind; his ideal was to achieve a consciousness of inner eternity and then be a source of radiant influence and action." But

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where and when did Buddha say these things, use these terms or express these ideas? "The service of mankind" sounds like a very modern and European conception; it reminds me of some European interpretations of the Gita as merely teaching the disinterested performance of duty or the pronouncement that the whole idea of the Gita is service. The exclusive stress or overstress on mankind or humanity is also European. Mahayanist Buddhism laid stress on compassion, fellow-feeling with all, *vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam*, just as the Gita speaks of the feeling of oneness with all beings and pre-occupation with the good of all beings, *sarvabhūta hite ratāḥ*, but this does not mean humanity only, but all beings and *vasudha* means all earth-life. Are there any sayings of Buddha which would justify the statement that the object or one object in attaining to Nirvana was to become a source of radiant influence and action? The consciousness of inner eternity may have that result, but can we really say that that was Buddha's ideal, the object which he held in view or for which he came?

5-7-1947

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Approach to Supreme Truth through Spiritual Mind and Supermind

THE passage* in the "YOGA AND ITS OBJECTS" is written from the point of view of the spiritualised Mind approaching the supreme Truth directly, without passing through the Supermind or disappearing into it. The Mind spiritualises itself by shedding all its own activities and formations and reducing everything to a pure Existence, *Sad-Atman*, from which all things and activities proceed and which supports everything. When it wants to go still beyond, it negates yet further and arrives at an *Asat*, which is the negation of all this existence and yet something inconceivable to mind, speech or defining experience. It is the silent Unknowable, the Turiya or featureless and relationless Absolute of the monistic Vedantins, the Shunyam of the nihilistic Buddhists, the Tao or omnipresent and transcendent Nihil of the Chinese, the indefinable and ineffable Permanent of the Mahayana. Many Christian mystics also speak of the necessity of a complete ignorance in order to get the supreme experience and speak

* "Behind the *Sad-Atman* is the silence of the *Asat* which the Buddhist Nihilists realised as the Shunyam and beyond that silence is the Paratpara Purusha: *Puruṣo vareṇya āditya varṇastamasah parastāt.*"

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too of the divine Darkness—they mean the shedding of all mental knowledge, making a blank of the mind and engulfing it in the Unmanifest, the *param avyaktam*. All this is the mind's way of approaching the Supreme—for beyond the *avyakta*, *tamasah parastat* is the Supreme, the Purushottama of the Gita, the Parampurusha of the Upanishads. It is *adityavarna* in contrast to the darkness of the Unmanifest; it is a metaphor, but not a mere metaphor, for it is a symbol also, a symbol visually seen by the *sukshma drishti*, the subtle vision, and not merely a symbol, but, as one might say, a fact of spiritual experience. The sun in the Yoga is the symbol of the Supermind and the Supermind is the first power of the Supreme which one meets across the border where the experience of spiritualised mind ceases and the unmodified divine Consciousness begins the domain of the supreme Nature, *Para Prakriti*. It is that Light of which the Vedic mystics got a glimpse and it is the opposite of the intervening darkness of the Christian mystics, for the Supermind is all light and no darkness. To the mind the Supreme is *avyaktāt param avyakta* but if we follow the line leading to the Supermind, it is an increasing affirmation rather than an increasing negation through which we move.

Light is always seen in Yoga with the inner eye,

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even with the outer eye, but there are many lights; all are not and all do not come from the supreme Light, *param jyotih*.

19-8-1932

Jainism and Supramental Yoga

THE Jain philosophy is concerned with individual perfection. Our effort is quite different. We want to bring down the Supermind as a new faculty. Just as the mind is now a permanent state of consciousness in humanity, so also we want to create a race in which the Supermind will be a permanent state of consciousness.

Overself and Integral Realisation

THE methods described in the account are the well-established methods of Jnana Yoga—(1) one-pointed concentration followed by thought-suspension, (2) the method of distinguishing or finding out the true self by separating it from mind, life, body and

coming to the pure 'I' behind; this also can disappear into the impersonal Self. The usual result is a merging in the Atman or Brahman—which is what one would suppose is meant by the Overself, for it is that which is the real Overself. This Brahman or Atman is everywhere, all is in it, it is in all, but it is in all not as an individual being in each but is the same in all—as the Ether is in all. When the merging in the Overself is complete, there is no ego, no distinguishable I, nor any formed separative person or personality. All is an indivisible and undistinguishable Oneness either free from all formation or carrying all formations in it without being affected; one can realise it in either way. There is a realisation in which all things are moving in the one Self and this Self is there stable in all beings; there is another more complete and thorough-going in which not only is it so but all are vividly realised as the Self, the Brahman, the Divine. In the former, it is possible to dismiss all beings as creations of Maya, leaving the one Self alone as true—in the other it is easier to regard them as real manifestations of the Self, not as illusions. But one can also regard all beings as souls, independent realities in an eternal Nature dependent on the one Divine. These are the characteristic realisations of the Overself familiar to the Vedanta. But on the other hand,

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you say that this Overself is realised as lodged in the heart-centre, and it is described as something concealed which when it manifests appears as the real Thinker, source of all action but now guiding thought and action in the Truth. Now the first description applies to the Purusha in the heart, described by the Gita as Ishwara situated in the heart and by the Upanishads as the Purusha Antaratma; the second could apply also to the mental Purusha, *manomayah prāṇasarīra netā* of the Upanishads, the mental Being or Purusha who leads the life and the body. So your question is one which on the data given relates to and accepts all these experiences, but they are strung together without any sufficient distinction or gradation being made or thought necessary between the various aspects of the one Being. There are a thousand ways of approaching and realising the Divine and each way has its own experiences which have their own truth and stand really on a basis one in essence but complex in aspects, common to all but not expressed in the same way by all. There is not much use in discussing these variations; the important thing is to follow one's own way well and thoroughly. In this Yoga, one can realise the psychic being as a portion of the Divine seated in the heart with the Divine supporting it there—this psychic being takes charge of

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the sadhana and turns the whole being to the Truth, the Divine, with results in the mind, the vital and the physical consciousness which I need not go into here—that is the first transformation. We realise next the one Self, Brahman, Divine, first above the body, life, mind and not only within the heart supporting them—above and free and unattached as the static Self in all and dynamic too as the active Divine Being and Power, Ishwara-Shakti, containing the world and pervading it as well as transcending it, manifesting all cosmic aspects. But what is most important for us is that it manifests as a transcending Light, Knowledge, Power, Purity, Peace, Ananda, of which we become aware and which descends into the being and progressively replaces the ordinary consciousness itself by its own movements—that is the second transformation. We realise also the consciousness itself as moving upward, ascending through many planes, physical, vital, mental, over-mental to the supramental and Ananda planes. This is nothing new; it is stated in the Taittiriya Upanishad that there are five Purushas, the physical, the vital, the mental, the Truth Purusha (supramental) and the Bliss Purusha; it says that one has to draw the physical self into the vital self, the vital into the mental, the mental into the Truth self, the Truth self into the Bliss Self and so attain perfection.

But in this Yoga we become aware not only of this taking up but of a pouring down of the power of the higher Self, so that there comes in the possibility of a descent of the supramental Self and Nature to dominate and change our present nature and turn it from nature of Ignorance into nature of Truth-Knowledge (and through the supramental into nature of Ananda)—this is the third or supramental transformation. It does not always go in this order, for with many the spiritual descent begins first in an imperfect way before the psychic is in front and in charge, but the psychic development has to be attained before a perfect and unhampered spiritual descent can take place, and the last or supramental change is impossible so long as the first have not become full and complete. That's the whole matter put as briefly as possible.

Transformation in Supramental Yoga

WHAT you demand of me would mean a volume, not a letter—especially as these are matters of which people know a great deal less than nothing and would either understand nothing or misunderstand

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everything. Some day, I suppose, I shall write something but the supramental won't bear talking of now. Something about the spiritual transformation might be possible and I may finish the letter on that point.

I do not want to go further into the question of M's realisation. As I have said, comparisons are of no use; each path has its own aim and direction and method, and the truth of each one does not invalidate the truth of the other. The Divine (or if you like, the Self) has many aspects and can be realised in many ways—to dwell upon these differences is irrelevant and without use.

"Transformation" is a word that I have brought in myself (like "Supermind") to express certain spiritual concepts and spiritual facts of the integral Yoga. People are now taking them up and using them in senses which have nothing to do with the significance which I put into them. Purification of the nature by the "influence" of the Spirit is not what I mean by transformation; purification is only part of a psychic change or a psycho-spiritual change—the word besides has many senses and is very often given a moral or ethical meaning which is foreign to my purpose. What I mean by the spiritual transformation is something dynamic (not merely liberation of the Self or realisation of the One which can very well be attained without any descent). It is a putting on

of the spiritual consciousness, dynamic as well as static, in every part of the being down to the subconscious. That cannot be done by the influence of the Self leaving the consciousness fundamentally as it is with only purification, enlightenment of the mind and heart and quiescence of the vital. It means a bringing down of the divine Consciousness static and dynamic into all these parts and the entire replacement of the present consciousness by that. This we find unveiled and unmixed above mind, life and body. It is a matter of the undeniable experience of many that this can descend and it is my experience that nothing short of its *full* descent can thoroughly remove the veil and mixture and effect the full spiritual transformation. No metaphysical or logical reasoning in the voids as to what the Atman "must" do or can do or needs or needs not to do is relevant here or of any value. I may add that transformation is not the central object of other paths as it is of this Yoga—only so much purification and change is demanded by them as will lead to liberation and the beyond-life. The influence of the Atman can no doubt do that—a full descent of a new consciousness into the whole nature from top to bottom to transform life here is not needed at all for the spiritual escape from life.

Liberation and Transformation

THE heart spoken of by the Upanishads corresponds with the physical cardiac centre; it is the *hritpadma* of the Tantriks. As a subtle centre, *chakra*, it is supposed to have its apex on the spine and to broaden out in front. Exactly where in this area one or another feels it does not matter much; to feel it there and be guided by it is the main thing. I cannot say what M has realised—but what is described as the Self is certainly this Purusha Antaratma but concerned here rather with Mukti and a liberated action than with transformation of the nature. What the psychic realisation does bring is a psychic change of the nature purifying it and turning it altogether towards the Divine. After that or along with it comes the realisation of the cosmic Self. It is these two things that the old Yogas encompassed and through them they passed to Moksha, Nirvana or the departure into some kind of celestial transcendence. The Yoga practised here includes both liberation and transcendence, but it takes liberation or even a certain Nirvana, if that comes, as a first step and not as the last step of its siddhi. Whatever exit to or towards the Transcendent it achieves is an ascent accompanied by a descent of the power, light, consciousness that has been achieved and it

is by such descents that is achieved the spiritual and supramental transformation here. This does not seem to be admitted in M's thought; he considers the Descent as superfluous and logically impossible. "The Divine is here, from where will He descend?" is his argument. But the Divine is everywhere, he is above as well as within, he has many habitats, many strings to his bow of Power, there are many levels of his dynamic Consciousness and each has its own light and force. He is not confined to his position in the heart or to the single word of the psycho-spiritual realisation. He has also his supramental station above the heart-centre and mind-centre and can descend from there if he wills to do so.

*Immortality, Spiritual & Supramental Realisation,
and Triple Transformation*

To merge the consciousness in the Divine and to keep the psychic being controlling and changing all the nature and keeping it turned to the Divine till the whole being can live in the Divine is the transformation we seek. There is further the supramentalisation, but this only carries the transformation to its own

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highest and largest possibilities—it does not alter its essential nature.

Immortality is one of the possible results of supramentalisation, but it is not an obligatory result and it does not mean that there will be an eternal or indefinite prolongation of life as it is. That is what many think it will be, that they will remain what they are with all their human desires and the only difference will be that they will satisfy them endlessly; but such an immortality would not be worth having and it would not be long before people are tired of it. To live in the Divine and have the divine Consciousness is itself immortality and to be able to divinise the body also and make it a fit instrument for divine works and divine life would be its material expression only.

By divine realisation is meant the spiritual realisation—the realisation of Self, Bhagwan or Brahman on the mental-spiritual plane or else the overmental plane. That is a thing (at any rate the mental-spiritual) which thousands have done. So it is obviously easier to do than the supramental. Also nobody can have the supramental realisation who has not had the spiritual. It is true that neither can be got in an effective way unless the whole being is turned towards it—unless there is a real and very serious spirit and dynamic reality of sadhana. It is true

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that I want the supramental not for myself but for the earth and souls born on the earth, and certainly therefore I cannot object if anybody wants the supramental. But there are the conditions. He must want the divine Will first and the soul's surrender and spiritual realisation (through works, bhakti, knowledge, self-perfection) on the way....

The central sincerity is the first thing and sufficient for an aspiration to be entertained—a total sincerity is needed for the aspiration to be fulfilled.

There are different statuses of the divine consciousness. There are also different statuses of transformation. First is the psychic transformation in which all is in contact with the Divine through the individual psychic consciousness. Next is the spiritual transformation in which all is merged in the Divine in the cosmic consciousness. Third is the supramental transformation in which all becomes supramentalised in the divine gnostic consciousness. It is only with the latter that there can begin the *complete* transformation of mind, life and body—in my sense of completeness.

April, 1935

INTEGRAL YOGA & OTHER SPIRITUAL PATHS

Ramakrishna and Transformation

RAMAKRISHNA himself never thought of transformation or tried for it. All he wanted was bhakti for the Mother and along with that he received whatever knowledge she gave him and did whatever she made him do. He was intuitive and psychic from the beginning and only became more and more so as he went on. There was no need in him for the transformation which we seek; for although he spoke of the divine man (Ishwarkoti) coming down the stairs as well as ascending, he had not the idea of a new consciousness and a new race and the divine manifestation in the earth-nature.

SECTION THREE
RELIGION, MORALITY, IDEALISM
&
YOGA

*Spiritual Evolution—Positivist Scepticism
and Faith*

ALL that you say only amounts, on the general issue, to the fact that this is a world of slow evolution in which man has emerged out of the beast and is still not out of it, light out of darkness, and a higher consciousness out of first a dead and then a struggling and troubled unconsciousness. A spiritual consciousness is emerging and it is through this spiritual consciousness that one can meet the Divine. Religions, full of vital and mental, mixed, troubled and ignorant stuff, can only get glimpses of the Divine; positivist reason with its questioning based upon things as they are and refusing to believe in anything that may or will be cannot get any vision at all. The spiritual is a new consciousness that has to evolve and has been evolving. It is quite natural that at first and for a long time only a few should get the full light, while a greater number but still only a few compared with the mass of humanity, should get it partially. But what has been gained by the few can at a stage of the evolution be completed

and more generalised and that is the attempt which we are making. But if this greater consciousness of light, peace and joy is to be gained, it cannot be by questioning and scepticism which can only fall back on what is and say: "It is impossible, what has not been in the past cannot be in the future, what is so imperfectly realised as yet cannot be better realised in the future." A faith, a will, or at least a persistent demand and aspiration are needed—a feeling that with this and this alone I can be satisfied and a push towards it that will not cease till it is done. That is why a spirit of scepticism and denial stands in the way, because they stand against the creation of the conditions under which spiritual experience can unroll itself....

1933

*Significance of the Recent Spiritual History
of India*

I REGARD the spiritual history of mankind and especially of India as a constant development of a divine purpose, not a book that is closed, the lines of which have to be constantly repeated. Even

RELIGION, MORALITY, IDEALISM & YOGA

the Upanishads and the Gita were not final though everything may be there in seed. In this development the recent spiritual history of India is a very important stage and the names I mentioned had a special prominence in my thought at the time—they seemed to me to indicate the lines from which the future spiritual development had most directly to proceed, not staying but passing on. I may say that it is far from my purpose to propagate any religion, new or old, for humanity in the future. A way to be opened that is still blocked, not a religion to be founded, is my conception of the matter.

18-8-1935

Hindu Religion

I do not take the same view of the Hindu religion as J. Religion is always imperfect because it is a mixture of man's spirituality with his endeavours that come in in trying to sublimate ignorantly his lower nature. Hindu religion appears to me as a cathedral-temple, half in ruins, noble in the mass,

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often fantastic in detail but always fantastic with a significance—crumbling or badly outworn in places, but a cathedral-temple in which service is still done to the Unseen and its real presence can be felt by those who enter with the right spirit. The outer social structure which it built for its approach is another matter.

19-9-1936

Inadequacy of Religion

WHAT K says—the central thing—is very correct, as always, the position of all who have any notion of spirituality, though the religionists seem to find it difficult to get to it. But though Christ and Krishna are the same, they are the same in difference,—that is indeed the utility of so many manifestations instead of there being only one as these missionaries would have it. But is it really because the historical Christ has been made too much the foundation-stone of the Faith that Christianity is failing? It may be something inadequate in the religion itself—perhaps in Religion itself; for all

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religions are a little off-colour now. The need of a larger opening of the soul into the Light is being felt, an opening through which the expanding human mind and heart can follow.

26-1-1936

Moral and Spiritual Law of Action

THE principle of life which I seek to establish is spiritual. Morality is a question of man's mind and vital, it belongs to a lower plane of consciousness. A spiritual life therefore cannot be founded on a moral basis, it must be founded on a spiritual basis. This does not mean that the spiritual man must be immoral—as if there were no other law of conduct than the moral. The law of action of the spiritual consciousness is higher, not lower than the moral—it is founded on union with the Divine and living in the Divine Consciousness and its action is founded on obedience to the Divine Will.

10-9-1935

Idealist Activism and Dynamic Yoga

I HAD never a very great confidence in X's yoga-turn getting the better of his activism, he has two strong ties that prevent it,—ambition and need to act and lead in the vital, and in the mind a mental idealism; these two things are the great fosterers of illusion. The spiritual path needs a certain amount of realism—one has to see the real value of the things that are, which is very little except as steps in evolution. Then one can either follow the spiritual static path of rest and release or the spiritual dynamic path of a greater truth to be brought down into life.

12-12-1934

Progress of Humanity

TODAY a Kanchanjangha of correspondence has fallen on my head, so I could not write about Humanity and its progress. Were not the later views of Lowes Dickinson grayed over by the sickly cast of a disappointed idealism? I have not myself an exaggerated respect for Humanity and what it is—

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but to say that there has been no progress at all is as much an exaggerated pessimism as the rapturous hallelujahs of the nineteenth century to a progressive Humanity were an exaggerated optimism. I shall manage to read through the chapter you sent me, though how I manage to find time for these things is a standing miracle and a signal proof of a Divine Providence.

Yes, the progress you are making is of the genuine kind,—the signs are recognisable. And after all, the best way to make Humanity progress is to move on oneself,—that may sound either individualistic or egoistic, but it isn't: it is only common sense,—as the Gita says:

“Whatever the best do is taken as the model by the rest.”¹

There are always unregenerate parts tugging people backwards and who is not divided? But it is best to put one's trust in the soul, the spark of the Divine within and foster that till it rises into a sufficient flame.

¹ *yadyadācarati śreṣṭhastadevetaro janah*

Collapse of Modern Idealism

As for your question—Tagore, of course, belonged to an age which had faith in its ideas and whose very denials were creative affirmations. That makes an immense difference. Your strictures on his later development may or may not be correct, but this mixture even was the note of the day and it expressed a tangible hope of a fusion into something new and true—therefore it could create. Now all that idealism has been smashed to pieces by the immense adverse event and everybody is busy exposing its weaknesses—but nobody knows what to put in its place. A mixture of scepticism and slogans, “Heil-Hitler” and the Fascist Salute and the Five-Year-Plan and the beating of everybody into one amorphous shape, a disabused denial of all ideals on one side and on the other a blind “shut-my-eyes and shut-everybody’s-eyes” plunge into the bog in the hope of finding some firm foundation there, will not carry us very far. And what else is there? Until new spiritual values are discovered, no great enduring creation is possible.

24-3-1934

RELIGION, MORALITY, IDEALISM AND YOGA

Ineffective Intellectuals

It is queer these intellectuals go on talking of creation while all they stand for is collapsing into the *Néant* without their being able to raise a finger to save it. What are they going to create, and from what material? Besides what use is it all if a Hitler with his cudgel or a Mussolini with his castor oil can come at any moment and wash it out or beat it into dust?

Intellectuals and Politicians

Yes, but human reason is a very convenient and accommodating instrument and works only in the circle set for it by interest, partiality and prejudice. The politicians reason wrongly or insincerely and have power to enforce the results of their reasoning so as to make a mess of the world's affairs: the intellectuals reason and show what their minds show them, which is far from being always the truth, for it is generally decided by intellectual preference and the mind's inborn education-inculcated angle of vision; but even when they see it, they have no power to enforce it. So between blind power and

seeing impotence the world moves, achieving destiny through a mental muddle.

The Only Way Out

As for the detachment of which you speak, it comes by attaining the poise of the Spirit, the equality of which the Gita speaks always, but also by sight, by knowledge. For instance, looking at what happened in 1914—or for that matter, at all that is and has been happening in human history—the eye of the Yogin sees not only the outward events and persons and causes, but the enormous forces which precipitate them into action. If the men who fought were instruments in the hands of rulers and financiers, etc., these in turn were mere puppets in the clutch of these forces. When one is habituated to see the things behind, one is no longer prone to be touched by the outward aspects—or to expect any remedy from political, institutional or social changes; the only way out is through the descent of a consciousness which is not the puppet of these forces but is greater than they are and can force them either to change or disappear.

17-7-1931

SECTION FOUR

OBJECTS

OF

SRI AUROBINDO'S SADHANA

Opening the Way

MY sadhana is not a freak or a monstrosity or a miracle done outside the laws of Nature and the conditions of life and consciousness on earth. If I could do these things or if they could happen in my Yoga, it means that they can be done and that therefore these developments and transformations are possible in the terrestrial consciousness....

Sadhana for the Earth-Consciousness

My point about my sadhana was that my sadhana was not done for myself but for the earth-consciousness as a showing of the way towards the Light, so that whatever I showed in it to be possible—inner growth, transformation, manifesting of new faculties, etc.—was not of no importance to anybody, but meant as an opening of lines and ways for what had to be done. The question of degree of greatness does not come in at all.

May, 1933

Conditions for Supramentalisation

I HAVE no intention of achieving the Supermind for myself only—I am not doing anything for myself, as I have no personal need of anything, neither of salvation (Moksha) nor supramentalisation. If I am seeking after supramentalisation, it is because it is a thing that has to be done for the earth-consciousness and if it is not done in myself, it cannot be done in others. My supramentalisation is only a key for opening the gates of the Supramental to the earth-consciousness; done for its own sake, it would be perfectly futile. But it does not follow either that if or when I become supramental, everybody will become supramental. Others can so become who are ready for it, when they are for it—though of course the achievement in myself will be to them a great help towards it. It is therefore quite legitimate to have the aspiration for it—provided:

(1) One does not make a too personal or egoistic affair of it turning it into a Nietzschean or other ambition to be superman.

(2) One is ready to undergo the conditions and stages needed for the achievement.

(3) One is sincere and regards it as a part of the seeking of the Divine and consequent culmination

OBJECTS OF SRI AUROBINDO'S SADHANA

of the Divine Will in one and insists on no more than the fulfilment of that Will whatever it may be, psychicisation, spiritualisation or supramentalisation. It should be regarded as the fulfilment of God's working in the world, not as a personal chance or achievement.

April, 1935

Certitude of Supramental Advent

I HAVE already spoken about the bad conditions of the world; the usual idea of the occultists about it is that the worse they are the more is probable the coming of an intervention or a new revelation from above. The ordinary mind cannot know—it has either to believe or disbelieve or wait and see.

As to whether the Divine seriously means something to happen, I believe it is intended. I know with absolute certitude that the Supramental is a truth and that its advent is in the very nature of things inevitable. The question is as to the when and the how. That also is decided and predestined from somewhere above; but it is here being fought out amid a rather grim clash of conflicting forces.

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For in the terrestrial world the predetermined result is hidden and what we see is a whirl of possibilities and forces attempting to achieve something with the destiny of it all concealed from human eyes. This is however certain that a number of souls have been sent to see that it shall be now. That is the situation. My faith and will are for the now. I am speaking of course on the level of the human intelligence—mystically-rationally, as one might put it. To say more would be going beyond that line. You don't want me to start prophesying, I suppose? As a rationalist, you can't.

28-12-1934

Inevitability of Supramental Descent

I MUST remind you that I have been an intellectual myself and no stranger to doubts—both the Mother and myself have had one side of the mind as positive and as insistent on practical results and more so than any Russell can be. We could never have been contented with the shining ideas and phrases which a Rolland or another takes for gold coin of Truth. We know well what is the difference between a subjec-

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tive experience and a dynamic outward-going and realising Force. So although we have faith, (and who ever did anything great in the world without having faith in his mission or the Truth at work behind him?) we do not found ourselves on faith alone, but on a great ground of knowledge which we have been developing and testing all our lives. I think I can say that I have been testing day and night for years upon years more scrupulously than any scientist his theory or his method on the physical plane. That is why I am not alarmed by the aspect of the world around me or disconcerted by the often successful fury of the adverse Forces who increase in their rage as the Light comes nearer and nearer to the field of earth and Matter.

If I believe in the probability and not only possibility, if I feel practically certain of the Supramental Descent (I do not fix a date), it is because I have my grounds for the belief, not a faith in the air. I know that the Supramental Descent is inevitable—I have faith in view of my experience that the time can be and should be now and not in a later age. . . . But even if I knew it to be for a later time, I would not swerve from my path or be discouraged or flag in my labour. Formerly I might have been, but not *now*—after all the path I have traversed. When one is sure of the Truth, or even when one

believes the thing one pursues to be the only possible solution, one does not stipulate for an immediate success, one travels towards the Light taking as well worth while and facing every risk of the adventure. Still, like you, it is now, in this life that I insist on it and not in another or in the hereafter.

30-8-1932

Importance of "Trifles"

I CANNOT say that I follow very well the logic of your doubts. How does the suffering of a noble and selfless friend invalidate the hope of Yoga? There are many dismal spectacles in the world, but that is after all the very reason why Yoga has to be done. If the world were all happy and beautiful and ideal, who would want to change it or find it necessary to bring down a higher consciousness into the earthly Mind and Matter? Your other argument is that the work of the Yoga itself is difficult, not easy, not a happy canter to the goal. Of course it is, because the world and human nature are what they are. I never said it was easy or that there were not obstinate difficulties in the way of the endeavour. Again, I

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do not understand your point about raising up a new race by my going on writing "trivial" letters ten hours a day. Of course not—nor by writing important letters either; even if I were to spend my time writing fine poems it would not build up a new race. Each activity is important in its own place—an electron or a molecule or a grain may be small things in themselves, but in their place they are indispensable to the building up of a world; it cannot be made up only of mountains and sunsets and streamings of the aurora borealis—though these have their place there. All depends on the force behind these things and the purpose in their action—and that is known to the Cosmic Spirit which is at work; and it works, I may add, not by the mind or according to human standards but by a greater consciousness which, starting from an electron, can build up a world and, using a tangle of ganglia, can make them the base here for the works of the Mind and Spirit in Matter, produce a Ramakrishna, or a Napoleon, or a Shakespeare. Is the life of a great poet either made up only of magnificent and important things? How many trivial things had to be dealt with and done before there could be produced a "KING LEAR" or a "HAMLET"? Again, according to your own reasoning, would not people be justified in mocking at your pother—so they would call it, I do not—

about metre and scansion and how many ways a syllable can be read? Why, they might say, is he wasting his time in trivial prosaic things like this when he might have been spending it in producing a beautiful lyric or fine music? But the worker knows and respects the material with which he must work and he knows why he is busy with "trifles" and small details and what is their place in the fullness of his labour.

As for faith, you write as if I never had a doubt or any difficulty. I have had worse than any human mind can think of. It is not because I have ignored difficulties, but because I have seen them more clearly, experienced them on a larger scale than any one living now or before me that, having faced and measured them, I am sure of the results of my work. But even if I still saw the chance that it might come to nothing (which is impossible), I would go on unperturbed, because I would still have done to the best of my power the work that I had to do and what is so done always counts in the economy of the universe. But why should I feel that all this may come to nothing when I see each step and where it is leading and every week, every day—once it was every year and month and hereafter it will be every day and hour—brings me so much nearer to my goal? In the way that one treads with the greater

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Light above, even every difficulty gives its help and has its value and Night itself carries in it the burden of the Light that has to be.

December, 1933

Object of Seeking the Supermind

THESE egoistic terms are not those in which my vital moves. It is a higher Truth I seek, whether it makes men greater or not is not the question, but whether it will give them truth and peace and light to live in and make life something better than a struggle with ignorance and falsehood and pain and strife. Then, even if they are less great than the men of the past, my object will have been achieved. For me mental conceptions cannot be the end of all things. I know that the Supermind is a truth.

It is not for personal greatness that I am seeking to bring down the Supermind. I care nothing for greatness or littleness in the human sense. I am seeking to bring some principle of inner Truth, Light, Harmony, Peace into the earth-consciousness; I see it above and know what it is—I feel it ever

gleaming down on my consciousness from above and I am seeking to make it possible for it to take up the whole being into its own native power, instead of the nature of man continuing to remain in half-light, half-darkness. I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here to be the final sense of the earth evolution. If greater men than myself have not had this vision and this ideal before them, that is no reason why I should not follow my Truth-sense and Truth-vision. If human reason regards me as a fool for trying to do what Krishna did not try, I do not in the least care. There is no question of X or Y or anybody else in that. It is a question between the Divine and myself—whether it is the Divine Will or not, whether I am sent to bring that down or open the way for its descent or at least make it more possible or not. Let all men jeer at me if they will or all Hell fall upon me if it will for my presumption,—I go on till I conquer or perish. This is the spirit in which I seek the Supermind, no hunting for greatness for myself or others.

10-2-1935

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The Earthly Burden

I USE the language of the mind because there is no other which human beings can understand,—even though most of them understand it badly. If I were to use a supramental language like Joyce, you would not even have the illusion of understanding it; so, not being an Irishman, I don't make the attempt. But of course any one who wants to change earth-nature must first accept it in order to change it. To quote from an unpublished poem¹ of my own:

He who would bring the heavens here,
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way....

25-8-1935

Bridging the Empyrean and the Abyss

No, it is not with the Empyrean that I am busy: I wish it were. It is rather with the opposite end of

¹ "A GOD'S LABOUR" subsequently published in *Poems Past and Present* by Sri Aurobindo.

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things; it is in the Abyss that I have to plunge to build a bridge between the two. But that too is necessary for my work and one has to face it.

30-5-1936

The Burden of Love

IT is only divine Love which can bear the burden I have to bear, that all have to bear who have sacrificed everything else to the one aim of uplifting earth out of its darkness towards the Divine. The Gallio-like “Je m’en fiche”-ism (I do not care)—would not carry me one step; it would certainly not be divine. It is quite another thing that enables me to walk unweeping and unlamenting towards the goal.

April, 1934

The Struggle and the Battle

BUT what strange ideas again!—that I was born with a supramental temperament and that I know noth-

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ing of hard realities! Good God! My whole life has been a struggle with hard realities, from hardships, starvation in England and constant dangers and fierce difficulties to the far greater difficulties continually cropping up here in Pondicherry, external and internal. My life has been a battle from its early years and is still a battle: the fact that I wage it now from a room upstairs and by spiritual means as well as others that are external makes no difference to its character. But of course as we have not been shouting about these things, it is natural, I suppose, for others to think that I am living in an august, glamorous, lotus-eating dreamland where no hard facts of life or Nature present themselves. But what an illusion all the same!

Action of Supramental Truth-Power

You have created your own bewildering problem by supplying your own data! There is nothing nebulous about the Supramental; its action depends on the utmost precision possible. As for solidity, since I once have got many solid things from much lower forces, I do not see why the highest ones should only give us nebulosities. But that seems to be the human mind's position: that only what is

earthy is solid, what is high must be misty and unreal—the worm is a reality, the eagle only a vapour!

However, I have not told N that I have been scaling and winging—on the contrary, I have been dealing with very hard practical facts. I only told him I had got the formula of solution for the difficulty that had been holding me up since last November and I am working it out.

To return to the Supramental: the Supramental is simply the direct self-existent Truth-Consciousness and the direct self-effective Truth-Power. There can therefore be no question of jugglery about it. What is not true is not Supramental. As for calm and silence, there is no need of the Supramental to get that. One can get it even on the level of Higher Mind which is the next above the human intelligence. I got these things in 1908, 27 years ago, and I can assure you they were solid enough and marvellous enough in all conscience without any need of Supramentality to make it more so. Again, “a calm that looks like action and motion” is a phenomenon of which I know nothing. A calm or silence that is what I have had—the proof is that out of an absolute silence of the mind I edited the *Bande Mataram* for 4 months and wrote 6 volumes of the *Arya*, not to speak of all the letters and messages etc. I have written since. If you say that writing is not an action

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or motion but only something that seems like it, a jugglery of the consciousness,—well, still out of that calm and silence I conducted a pretty strenuous political activity and have also taken my share in keeping up an Ashram which has at least an appearance to the physical senses of being solid and material! If you deny that these things are material or solid (which of course metaphysically you can), then you land yourself plump into Shankara's Illusionism, and there I will leave you.

You will say, however, that this is not the Supramental but at most the Overmind that helped me to these non-nebulous motions and action. But the Supermind is by definition a greater dynamic activity than mind or Overmind. I have said that what is not true is not Supramental; I will add that what is ineffective is not Supramental. And finally I conclude by saying that I have not told N that I have taken complete possession of the Supramental—I only admit to be very near to it. But "very near" is—well, after all—a relative phrase like all human phrases.

I don't know how you are to answer R. You might perhaps by my two formulas, but it is doubtful. Or perhaps you might tell him that the Supramental was silence—only, it would be untrue! So I leave you in your fix—there is no other go. At least until

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I have firm physical hold of the Supramental and can come and tell the mentals and humans,—no doubt in a language which will be intelligible to them,—I must be somewhat dumb, since they have wholly misunderstood even the little that has found voice through my writings up till now.

23-8-1935

The Present Power

I HAVE never told you that the power that works here is absolute at present; I have, on the contrary, told you that I am trying to make it absolute and it is for that that I want the Supermind to intervene. But to say that because it is not absolute therefore it does not exist, seems to me a logical inconsequence.

28-8-1934

Process of Supramental Descent

No, the Supramental has not descended into the body or into Matter—it is only at the point where such a descent has become not only possible but

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inevitable; I am speaking, of course, of my experience. But as my experience is the centre and condition of all the rest, that is sufficient for the promise.

My difficulty is that you all seem to expect a kind of miraculous fairy-tale change and do not realise that it is a rapid and concentrated evolution which is the aim of my sadhana and that there must be a process for it, a working of the higher in the lower and a dealing with all the necessary intervals—not a sudden feat of creation by which everything is done on a given date. It is a supramental but not an irrational process. What is to be done will happen—perhaps with a rush even—but in a workmanlike way and not according to Faerie.

14-11-1933

Perfection on the Physical Plane

As for the question about the illness, perfection in the physical plane is indeed part of the ideal of the Yoga, but it is the last item and, so long as the fundamental change has not been made in the material consciousness to which the body belongs, one may

have a certain perfection on other planes without having immunity in the body. We have not sought perfection for our own separate sake, but as part of a general change—creating a possibility of perfection for others. That could not have been done without our accepting and facing the difficulties of the realisation and transformation and overcoming them for ourselves. It has been done to a sufficient degree on the other planes—but not yet on the most material part of the physical plane. Till it is done, the fight there continues and, though there may be and is a force of Yogic action and defence, there cannot be immunity. The Mother's difficulties are not her own; she bears the difficulties of others and those that are inherent in the general action and working for the transformation. If it had been otherwise, it would be a very different matter.

August, 1936

Resistance to Supramental Descent

WHEN I wrote in my letters about the Supermind and the obstinate resistance, I spoke, of course, of

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something I had already spoken of before. I did not mean that the resistance was of an unexpected character or had altered anything essential. But in its nature the descent is not something arbitrary and miraculous but a rapid evolutionary process compressed into a few years which proceeds by taking up the present nature into its Light and pouring its Truth into the inferior planes. That cannot be done in the whole world at a time, but is done, like all such processes, first through selected Adhars and then on a wider scale. We have to do it through ourselves first and, through the circle of sadhaks gathered around us, in the terrestrial consciousness as typified here. If a few open, that is sufficient for the process to be possible. On the other hand, if there is a general misunderstanding and resistance (not in all, but in many), that makes it difficult and the process more laborious, but it does not make it impossible. I was not suggesting that it has become impossible, but that if the circumstances were made unfavourable by our being unable to concentrate enough on this thing of capital importance and having too much work to do of an irrelevant kind, the descent was likely to take longer than it would do otherwise. Certainly, when the Supramental does touch earth with a sufficient force to dig itself into the earth-consciousness, there will be no more

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chance of any success or survival for the Asuric Maya....

Progress might be slow at first, but progress would come; it would quicken afterwards and with the supramental force here, there would be for you as for others the full speed and certitude.

18-10-1934

Attacks and Advance

I AM afraid I cannot endorse your reading of the situation, at least so far as the Mother and myself and the prospects of the work are concerned. I can agree only that we have had a heavy time of it recently and that there has been a strong attack on the plane of the physical and material—but that (heavy attacks) is a thing we have been accustomed to for the last 30 years and it has never prevented us from making any necessary advance. I have never had any illusions about the path being comfortable and easy; I knew all along that the work could only be done if all the essential difficulties rose and were faced; so their rising cannot tire or dishearten me, whatever obstinacy there may

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be in the difficulties, whether our own or in the sadhaks or in Nature.

No, I am not tired or on the point of giving up. I have made inwardly steps in front in the last two or three months which had seemed impossible because of the obstinate resistance for years together and it is not an experience which pushes me to despair and to give up. If there is much resistance on one side, there have been large gains on the other—all has not been a picture of sterile darkness. You yourself are kept back only by the demon of doubt which bangs on you each door as you are opening it; you have only to set about resolutely slaying the Rakshasa and the doors will open to you as they have done to many others who were held up by their own mind or vital nature.

12-1-1934

SECTION FIVE

THE CENTRAL PROCESS
AND
FUNDAMENTAL REALISATIONS
OF
INTEGRAL YOGA

- I. PSYCHIC CONVERSION
- II. ASCENT TO HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS
- III. DESCENT AND TRANSFORMATION

I. PSYCHIC CONVERSION

The Path

YOU know the three things on which the realisation has to be based:

- (1) on a rising to a station above the mind and on the opening out of the cosmic consciousness;
- (2) on the psychic opening; and
- (3) on the descent of the higher consciousness with its peace, light, force, knowledge, Ananda etc. into all the planes of the being down to the most physical.

All this has to be done by the working of the Mother's force aided by your aspiration, devotion and surrender.

That is the Path. The rest is a matter of the working out of these things for which you have to have faith in the Mother's working.

30-10-1934

The Three Fundamental Realisations

THE fundamental realisations of this Yoga are:

1. The psychic change so that a complete devotion can be the main motive of the heart and the ruler of thought, life and action in constant union with the Mother and in her Presence.

2. The descent of the Peace, Power, Light, etc. of the Higher Consciousness through the head and heart into the whole being, occupying the very cells of the body.

3. The perception of the One and Divine infinitely everywhere, the Mother everywhere and living in that infinite consciousness.

17-9-1936

Psychic Transformation

THE psychic is the first of two transformations necessary; if you have the psychic transformation it facilitates immensely the other, i.e., the transformation of the ordinary human into the higher spiritual consciousness—otherwise one is likely to have either a slow and dull or exciting but perilous journey. . . .

I have never said anything about a "transformation of the psychic"; I have always written about a "psychic transformation" of the nature, which is a very different matter. I have sometimes written of it as a psychicisation of the nature. The psychic is in the evolution, part of the human being, its divine part—so a psychicisation will not carry one beyond the present evolution but will make the being ready to respond to all that comes from the Divine or Higher Nature and unwilling to respond to the Asura, Rakshasa, Pishacha or Animal in the being or to any resistance of the lower nature which stands in the way of the divine change.

The Psychic Being

It appears X supposed that by the psychic being I meant the enlightened ego. But people do not understand what I mean by the psychic being, because the word psychic has been used in English to mean anything of the inner mental, inner vital or inner physical or anything abnormal or occult or even the more subtle movements of the outer being, all in a jumble; also occult phenomena are often called psychic. The distinction between these different

parts of the being is unknown. Even in India the old knowledge of the Upanishads in which they are distinguished has been lost. The Jivatman, the psychic being (Purusha Antaratman), the Manomaya Purusha, the Pranamaya Purusha are all confused together.

1-6-1937

Psychic Being, Antahkarana and Ahambhava

I DO not know what is exactly meant by this phrase—it is too vague and limited for a description of the psychic. *Antahkarana* usually means the mind and vital as opposed to the body—the body being the outer instrument and *manah-prana*, the inner instrument of the soul. By psychic I mean something different from a purified mind and vital. A purified mind and vital are the result of the action of the awakened and liberated psychic being but it is not itself the psychic.

Again, it depends on what is meant by *Ahambhava*. But the psychic is not a *bhava*. It is a Purusha. *Ahambhava* is a formation of Prakriti, it is not a being

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or a Purusha. *Ahambhava* can disappear and yet the Purusha will be there.

By liberated psychic being I mean that it is no longer obliged to express itself under the conditions of the obscure and ignorant instruments, from behind a veil, but is able to come forward, control and change the action of mind and life and body.

If it is perhaps sometimes spoken of as purified and perfected, what must be meant is the psychic action in the mind, vital and the physical instruments. A purified inner being does not mean a purified psychic, but a purified inner mental, vital and physical. The epithets I used for the psychic were "awakened and liberated".

Spiritual individuality is rather a vague term and might be variously interpreted. I have written about the psychic being that the psychic is the soul or spark of the Divine Fire supporting the individual evolution on the earth and the psychic being is the soul-consciousness developing itself or rather its manifestation from life to life with the mind, vital and body as its instruments until all is ready for the union with the Divine. I don't know that I can add anything to that.

Soul-Spark and Psychic Being

THE soul is described as a spark of the Divine Fire in life and matter, that is an image. It has not been described as a spark of consciousness.

There is mental, vital, physical consciousness—different from the psychic. The psychic being and consciousness are not identical.

When the soul or “spark of the Divine Fire” begins to develop a psychic individuality, that psychic individuality is called the psychic being.

The soul or spark is there before the development of an organised vital and mind. The soul is something of the Divine that descends into the evolution as a divine Principle within it to support the evolution of the individual out of the Ignorance into the Light. It develops in the course of the evolution a psychic individual or soul individuality which grows from life to life, using the evolving mind, vital and body as its instruments. It is the soul that is immortal while the rest disintegrates; it passes from life to life carrying its experience in essence and the continuity of the evolution of the individual.

It is the whole consciousness, mental, vital, physical also, that has to rise and join the higher

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consciousness and, once the joining is made, the higher has to descend into them. The psychic is behind all that and supports it.

10-9-1937

Psychic Fire and Psychic Being

THE psychic fire is the fire of aspiration, purification and Tapasya which comes from the psychic being. It is not the psychic being, but a power of the psychic being. The psychic being is a Purusha, not a flame—the psychic fire is not the being, it is something proper to it.

May, 1935

Psychic Being and Centres

THE psychic being (which is the soul) does not make centres for itself in the Adhar. The centres are there. The psychic being can take control of the centres that are already there—the heart and the

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navel centre and the two below the navel. Also the mind and vital are not abolished—they are brought under the psychic influence and psychicised, or they are occupied by the higher consciousness from above and transformed into its instruments.

3-8-1934

Call of the Soul

WHAT you write is quite accurate about the true soul, the psychic being. But people mean different things when they speak of the soul. Sometimes it is what I have called in the *Arya* the desire-soul, —that is the vital with its mixed aspirations, desires, hungers of all kinds good and bad, its emotions, finer and grosser, or sensational urges crossed by the mind's idealisings and psychic stresses. But sometimes it is also the mind and vital under the stress of a psychic urge. The psychic, so long as it is veiled, must express itself through the mind and vital and its aspirations are mixed and coloured there by the vital and mental stuff. Thus the veiled psychic urge may express itself in the mind by a hunger in the thought for the knowledge of the

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Divine, what the Europeans call the intellectual love of God. In the vital it may express itself as a hunger or hankering after the Divine. It can bring much suffering because of the nature of the vital, its unquiet passions, desires, ardours, troubled emotions, cloudings, depressions, despairs. Nevertheless all cannot approach, at least cannot at once approach the Divine in the pure psychic way—the mental and vital approaches are often necessary beginnings and better from the spiritual point of view than unsensitiveness to the Divine. It is in both cases a call of the soul, the soul's urge—it only takes a form or colour due to the stress of the mind or vital nature.

27-5-1936

Psychic Push

THE push to drown oneself in the Divine is very rare. It is usually a mental idea, a vital urge or some quite inadequate reason that starts the thing—or else no reason at all. The only reality is the occult psychic push behind of which the surface consciousness is not aware or else hardly aware.

*Idealistic Notion, Religious Belief and
Spiritual Light*

AN idealistic notion or religious belief or emotion is something quite different from getting spiritual light. An idealistic notion might turn you towards getting spiritual light, but it is not the light itself. It is true however that "the spirit bloweth where it listeth" and that we can get an emotional impulse or touch or mental realisation of spiritual things from almost any circumstance, as Bilwamangal got it from the words of his courtesan mistress. Obviously, it happens because something is ready somewhere,—if you like, the psychic being waiting for its chance and taking some opportunity in mind, vital or heart to knock open a window somewhere.

27-10-1935

Best Means for Psychic Awakening

ASPIRATION, constant and sincere, and the will to turn to the Divine alone are the best means to bring forward the psychic.

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Importance of Psychic Change of Nature

I HAVE read your account of your sadhana. There is nothing to say, I think,—for it is all right—except that the most important thing for you is to develop the psychic fire in the heart and the aspiration for the psychic being to come forward as the leader of the sadhana. When the psychic does so, it will show you the “undetected ego-knots” of which you speak and loosen them or burn them in the psychic fire. This psychic development and the psychic change of mind, vital and physical consciousness is of the utmost importance because it makes safe and easy the descent of the higher consciousness and the spiritual transformation without which the supramental must always remain far distant. Powers etc. have their place, but a very minor one so long as this is not done.

28-2-1937

Soul's Action in Yoga

You are describing the action of the ordinary existence, not the Yoga. Yoga is a seeking (not a mental

searching), it is not experimenting in contraries and contradictories. It is the mind that does that and the mind that analyses. The soul does not search, analyse, experiment—it seeks, feels, experiences.

The only grain of truth in your statement is that the Yoga is very usually a series of ups and downs till you get to a certain height. But there is a quite different reason for that—not the vagaries of the soul. On the contrary, when the psychic being gets in front and becomes master, there comes in a fundamentally smooth action and although there are difficulties and undulations of movement, these are no longer of an abrupt or dramatic character.

*Psychic Awakening and Conversion—
Coming of Desires*

THE psychic being is always there, but is not felt because it is covered up by the mind and vital; when it is no longer covered up, it is then said to be awake. When it is awake, it begins to take hold of the rest of the being, to influence it and change it so that all may become the true expression of the inner soul. It is this change that is called the inner

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conversion. There can be no conversion without the awakening of the psychic being.

It is not necessary that there should be any particular strong desire at the time of the experience. What you describe is the general experience that all the ordinary vital movements are foreign to the true being and come from outside.

The desires come from outside, enter the subconscious vital and rise to the surface. It is only when they rise to the surface and the mind becomes aware of them, that people become conscious of the desire. It seems to them to be their own because they feel it thus rising from the vital into the mind and do not know that it came from outside. What belongs to the vital is not the desire itself, but the habit of responding to the desires that come into it from universal Prakriti.

19-4-1930

Action of the Psychic and True Vital Being

It is your psychic being which came in front, probably, or else it is the true vital being in you which was able to come in front because you took

the psychic attitude. When the psychic being comes in front, there is an automatic perception of the true and untrue, the divine and the undivine, the spiritual right and wrong of things, and the false vital and mental movements and attacks are immediately exposed and fall away and can do nothing; gradually the vital and physical as well as the mind get full of this psychic light and truth and sound feeling and purity, and such violent attacks as you have are impossible. When the true vital being comes forward, it is something wide and strong and calm, an unmoved and powerful warrior for the Divine and the Truth, repelling all enemies, bringing in a true strength and force, and opening the vital to the greater consciousness above. It has to be seen which of the two it is you feel within.

Soul and Nature

THE soul is the witness, upholder, master, experimenter, but it is master only in theory, in fact it is not master so long as it consents to the Ignorance. For that is a general consent which implies that the Prakriti gambols about with the Purusha and

does pretty well what she likes with him. When he wants to get back his mastery, make the theoretical practical, he needs a lot of tapasya to do it....

The psychic has always been veiled, consenting to the play of the mind, vital and physical, experiencing everything through them in the ignorant vital, mental and physical way. How then can it be that they are bound to change at once when it just takes the trouble to whisper or say, "Let there be Light"? They have a tremendous negating power and can refuse and do refuse point-blank. The mind resists with an obstinate persistency in argument and a constant confusion of ideas, the vital with a fury of bad will aided by the mind's obliging reasonings on its side, the physical resists with an obstinate inertia and crass fidelity to old habit, and when they have done, the general Nature comes in and says, "What, you are going to get free from me so early? Not, if I know it," and it besieges and throws back the old nature on you again and again as long as it can. Yet you say it is the soul that wants all this 'fun' and goes off laughing and prancing to get some more!....

Sudden Psychic Opening

It is very evident that D has had a sudden opening to spiritual experience—a surprisingly sudden opening, one would think, but it happens often in that way, especially if there is a sceptical mind outside and a soul ready for experience within. In such cases also it comes often after a blow such as his brother's illness, but I think there was already a turning of the mind which prepared it. This sudden and persistent visualisation also shows that there is a faculty within that has broken the gates which shut it in—the faculty of supraphysical vision. The coming up of the word “consecration” is also a familiar phenomenon of these experiences—it is what I call the voice of the psychic, an intimation from his own soul to the mind as to what it wants him to do. Now he has to accept it, for the assent of the nature, of the outward man to the inner voice, is necessary so that it may be effective. He is standing at the turning-point and has been given an indication of the new road his inner being, the Antaratman, wants him to follow—but, as I say, the assent of his mind and vital is necessary. If he can decide to consecrate, he must make the *sankalpa* of consecration, offer himself to the Divine and call for the help and the guidance. If he is not

able to do that at once, let him wait and see, but keeping himself open, as it were, to the continuation and development of the experience that has begun, till it becomes definitely imperative to his own feeling. He will receive help and, if he becomes conscious of it, then there can be no further question—it will be easy for him to proceed on the way.

8-11-1936

Psychic Experiences and Psychic Modification of Nature

It was certainly an experience of great value; a psychic experience par excellence. "A feeling of velvety softness within—an ineffable plasticity within" is a psychic experience and can be nothing else. It means a modification of the substance of the consciousness especially in the vital-emotional part, and such a modification prolonged or repeated till it became permanent would mean a great step in what I call the psychic transformation of the being. It is just these modifications in the inner substance that make transformation possible. Further, it was a modification that made a beginning

of Knowledge possible—for by Knowledge we mean in Yoga not thought or ideas about spiritual things but psychic understanding from within and spiritual illumination from above. Therefore the first result was this feeling of yours that “there was no ignominy in not understanding it all and that the true understanding would come only when one realised that one was completely impotent.” This was itself a beginning of understanding—a psychic understanding, something felt within which sheds a light or brings up a spiritual truth that mere thinking would not have given, also a truth that is effective in bringing both the enlightenment and solace you needed, for what the psychic being brings with it always is light and happiness, an inner understanding and relief and solace.

Another very promising aspect of this experience is that it came as an immediate response to an appeal to the Divine. You asked for the understanding and the way out and at once Krishna showed you both—the way out was the change of the consciousness within, the plasticity which makes the knowledge possible and also the understanding of the condition of mind and vital in which the true knowledge or power of knowledge could come. For the inner knowledge comes from within and above (whether from the Divine in the heart or from the Self above)

PSYCHIC CONVERSION

and for it to come, the pride of the mind and vital in the surface mental ideas and their insistence on them must go. One must know that one is ignorant before one can begin to know. This shows that I am not wrong in pressing for the psychic opening as the only way out. For as the psychic opens, such responses and much more also become common and the inner change also proceeds by which they are made possible.

31-5-1936

Consequences of Psychic Opening

WHEN the psychic being awakens, you grow conscious of your own soul; you know your self. And you no longer commit the mistake of identifying yourself with the mental or with the vital being. You do not mistake them for the soul.

Secondly, when awakened, the psychic being gives true bhakti for God or for the Guru. That bhakti is quite different from mental or vital bhakti.

In the mind one may have admiration or appreciation for the intellectual greatness of the man—or Guru, but it is merely mental; it does not carry the

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matter very far. Of course there is no harm in having that also. But by itself it does not open the whole of the inner being; it only establishes a mental contact.

The vital bhakti demands and demands. It imposes its own conditions. It surrenders itself to God, but conditionally. It says to God, "You are so great, I worship you, and now satisfy my this desire or that ambition, make me great, make me a great sadhak, a great Yogin, etc."

The unillumined mind also surrenders to the Truth, but makes its own conditions. It says to the Truth, "Satisfy my judgment and my opinion"; it demands the Truth to cast itself in the mind's own forms.

The vital being also insists on the Truth to throw itself into its own movement of force. The vital being pulls at the Higher Power and pulls and pulls at the vital being of the Guru.

Both of them (the mental and the vital) have got an *arrière-pensée* (mental reservation) in their surrender.

But the psychic being and its bhakti are not like that. Because it is in direct communication with the Divinity behind, it is capable of true bhakti. Psychic bhakti does not make any demand, makes no reservation. It is satisfied with its own existence.

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The psychic being knows how to obey the Truth in the right way. It gives itself up truly to God or to the Guru, and because it can give itself up truly, therefore it can also receive truly.

Thirdly, when the psychic being comes to the surface, it feels sad when the mental or the vital being is making a fool of itself. That sadness is purity offended.

When the mind is playing its own game or when the vital being is carried away by its own impulses, it is the psychic being which says, "I don't want these things; what am I here for after all? I am here for the Truth, I am not here for these things."

Psychic sadness is again different from mental dissatisfaction or vital sadness or physical depression.

If the psychic being is strong, it makes itself felt on the mental or the vital being, and forces them—compels them—to change. But if it is weak, the other parts take advantage of it and use the psychic sadness to their own advantage.

In some cases the psychic being comes up to the surface and upsets the mental or the vital being and throws everything into disorder. But if the mind or the vital being is stronger than the psychic, then it casts only an occasional influence and gradually retires behind. All its cry is in the wilderness;

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and the mental or the vital being goes on in its own round.

Lastly, the psychic being refuses to be deceived by appearances. It is not carried away by falsehood. It refuses to be depressed by falsehood—nor does it exaggerate the truth. For example, even if everything around says, "There is no God", the psychic being refuses to believe in it. It says, "I know, and I know because I feel."

And because it knows the thing behind, it is not deceived by appearances. It immediately feels the Force.

Also, when the psychic being is awakened, it throws out all the dross from the emotional being and makes it free from sentimentalism or the lower play of emotionalism.

But it does not carry in it the dryness of the mind or the exaggeration of the vital feelings. It gives the just touch to each emotion.

23-3-1926

II. ASCENT TO HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS

The Upward Opening

I MAY say that the opening upwards, the ascent into the Light and the subsequent descent into the ordinary consciousness and normal human life is very common as the first decisive experience in the practice of Yoga and may very well happen even without the practice of Yoga in those who are destined for the spiritual change, especially if there is a dissatisfaction somewhere with the ordinary life and a seeking for something more, greater or better. It comes often exactly in the way that she describes and the cessation of the experience and the descent also come in the same way. This first experience may be followed by a very long time during which there is no repetition of it or any subsequent experience. If there is a constant practice of Yoga, the interval need not be so long; but even so, it is often long enough. The descent is inevitable because it is not the whole being that has risen up but only something within, and all the rest of the nature is unprepared, absorbed in or attached to ordinary life and governed by movements that are not in

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consonance with the Light. Still, the something within is something central in the being and therefore the experience is in a way definitive and decisive. For it comes as a decisive intimation of the spiritual destiny and an indication of what must be reached some time in the life. Once it has been there, something is bound to happen which will open the way, determine the right knowledge and the right attitude enabling one to proceed on the way and bring a helping influence. After that, the work of clearing away the obstacles that prevent the return to the Light and the ascension of the whole being and, what is equally important, the descent of the Light into the whole being, can be begun and progress towards completion. It may take long or be rapid, that depends on the inner push and also on outer circumstances but the inner aspiration and endeavour count more than the circumstances which can accommodate themselves to the inner need if that is very strong. The moment has come for her and the necessary aspiration and knowledge and the influence that can help her.

ASCENT TO HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS

The Upward Movement

THE ascent or the upward movement takes place when there is a sufficient aspiration from the being, i.e., from the various mental, vital and physical planes. Each in turn ascends above the mind to the place where it meets the supramental and can then receive the origination of all its movements from above. The higher descends when you have a receptive quietude in the various planes of your being prepared to receive it. In either case, whether in aspiring upward to rise to the higher or in remaining passive and open to receive the higher, an entire calmness in the different parts of the being is the true condition.

If you do not have the necessary force in a quiet aspiration or will and if you find that a certain amount of effort will help you to rise upward, you may go on using it as a temporary means, until there is the natural openness in which a silent call or a simple effortless will is sufficient to induce the action of the Higher Shakti.

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Ascent to the Higher Consciousness

THERE is something in you that has become aware of the higher consciousness and gone up there—above the head where the ordinary consciousness and the higher planes meet. That has to be developed till the whole source of the consciousness is there and all the rest directed from there—with, at the same time, a liberation of the psychic so that it may support the action from above in the mind, the vital and in the physical parts.

It is the Atman, the spiritual being above the mind—the first experience of it is a silence and calm (which one perceives afterwards to be infinite and eternal), untouched by the movements of mind and life and body. The higher consciousness lives always in touch with the Self—the lower is separated from it by the activities of the Ignorance.

27-10-1933

Rising of the Kundalini

THE force which you felt must evidently have been a rising of the Kundalini ascending to join the

ASCENT TO HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS

Force above and bring down the energy needed to ease the depression and then again rising to enforce the connection between the Above and the lower centres. The seeming expansion of the head is due to the joining of the mind with the consciousness of the Self or Divine above. That consciousness is wide and illimitable and, when one rises into it, the individual consciousness also breaks its limits and feels wide and illimitable. At such times one often feels as if there were no head and no body but all were a wide self and its consciousness, or else the head or the body is only a circumstance in that. The body or the physical mind is sometimes startled or alarmed at these experiences because they are abnormal to it; but there is no ground for alarm,—these are usual experiences in the Yoga.

16-4-1936

Subtle Barrier to Ascent

WIDENESS is a sign of the extension of consciousness out of the ordinary limits—whiteness of the wideness means that it is the pure consciousness one is feeling, unless it is white light or luminous light

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which indicates the Mother's consciousness there or some influence of it. The subtle barrier you felt must have been the same thing that prevents your ascent from the heart and from it your going beyond into the regions above. There is always a sort of a lid there and it is only when that is opened or disappears that one can go freely above. One can be aware of "unseen wideness" but one is not a self there until that is done.

Sahasrara and Ajnachakra

(1)

THE crown is the place of passage between the body-consciousness with all it contains of mind and life and the higher being above the body. It is there that the two consciousnesses begin to meet.

14-4-1934

(2)

The thousand-petalled lotus is above the head. It is the seventh and highest centre.

ASCENT TO HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS

Usually those who take the centres in the body only, count six centres, the *sahasrara* being excluded.

13-4-1934

(3)

The centre at the crown must be part of the *sahasradala*, the centre of communication direct between the individual being and the infinite Consciousness above. There is not supposed to be any other main centre of dynamism between that and the *ajnachakra*. But there can be many nerve-centres in various parts of the body, apart from the six or rather seven main centres.

7-12-1936

(4)

In the forehead between the eyes but a little above is the *ajnachakra*, the centre of the inner will, also of the inner vision, the dynamic mind, etc. (This is not the ordinary outer mental will and sight, but something more powerful, belonging to the inner being.) When this centre opens and the

Force there is active, then there is the opening of a greater will, power of decision, formation, effectiveness, beyond what the ordinary mind can achieve.

17-3-1933

Experience of the Higher Peace and Force

THESE are the ordinary normal experiences of the sadhana when there is an opening from above—the contact with the peace of the Brahman, Self or Divine and the contact with the higher Power, the Power of the Mother. He does not know what they are, quite naturally, but feels very correctly and his description is quite accurate. “How beautiful, calm and still all seems—as if in water there were not even a wave. But it is not Nothingness. I feel a Presence steeped in life but absolutely silent and quiet in meditation,”—there could hardly be a better description of this experience—the experience of the peace and silence of the Divine or of the Divine itself in its own essential peace and silence. Also what he feels about the Force is quite correct, “something from above the mani-

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fested creation (mind—matter), a Force behind that is distinct from that which gives rise to emotions, anger, lust which are all purified and transformed gradually”, in other words, the Divine or Spiritual Force, other than the cosmic vital which supports the ordinary embodied consciousness; that is also very clear. I suppose it is only a contact yet, but a very true and vivid contact if it gives rise to so vivid and true a feeling. It looks as if he were going to make a very good beginning.

1-2-1936

Experience of Cosmic Self—Static and Dynamic

THE experiences were all right—but they give only one side of the Divine Truth, that which one attains through the higher mind—the other side is what one attains through the heart. Above the higher mind these two truths become one. If one realises the silent Atman above, there is no danger, but there is also no transformation, only *moksha*, *nirvana*. If one realises the cosmic self, dynamic and active, then one realises all as the Self, all as myself, that self as the Divine, etc. This is all true; but the danger is of the

ego catching hold of "my" in that conception of "all is myself". For this "myself" is not my personal self but everybody's self as well as mine. The way to get rid of any such danger is to remember that this Divine is also the Mother, that the personal "I" is a child of the Mother with whom I am one, yet different, her child, servant, instrument. I have said that you should not stop realising the Self as the cosmic consciousness, but should at the same time remember that all this is the Mother.

*Advantage of Self-Realisation preceding
Cosmic Consciousness*

LIBERATION is the first necessity, to live in the peace, silence, purity, freedom of the self. Along with that or afterwards if one awakens to the cosmic consciousness, then one can be free, yet one with all things.

To have the cosmic consciousness without liberation is possible, but then there is no freedom anywhere in the being from the lower nature and one may become in one's extended consciousness the playground of all kinds of forces without being able to be either free or master.

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On the other hand, if there has been Self-realisation, there is one part of the being that remains untouched amid the play of the cosmic forces—while if the peace and purity of the self has been established in the whole inner consciousness, then the outer touches of the lower nature can't come in or overpower. This is the advantage of Self-realisation preceding the cosmic consciousness and supporting it.

The Witness Purusha

THE consciousness you speak of would be described in the Gita as the witness Purusha. The Purusha or basic consciousness is the true being or at least, in whatever plane it manifests, represents the true being. But in the ordinary nature of man it is covered up by the ego and the ignorant play of the Prakriti and remains veiled behind as the unseen Witness supporting the play of the Ignorance. When it emerges, you feel it as a consciousness behind, calm, central, unidentified with the play which depends upon it. It may be covered over, but it is always there. The

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emergence of the Purusha is the beginning of liberation. But it can also become slowly the Master—slowly because the whole habit of the ego and the play of the lower forces is against that. Still it can dictate what higher play is to replace the lower movement and then there is the process of that replacement, the higher coming, the lower struggling to remain and push away the higher movement. You say rightly that the offering to the Divine shortens the whole thing and is more effective, but usually it cannot be done completely at once owing to the past habit and the two methods continue together until the complete surrender is possible.

31-5-1933

The Witness and the Player

As for the spectator and the coils of the dragon, it is the Chino-Japanese image for the world-force extending itself in the course of the universe and this expresses the attitude of the witness seeing it all and observing in its unfolding the unrolling of the play of the Divine Lila. It is this attitude that gives the greatest calm, peace, *samata* in face of the riddle of

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the cosmic workings. It is not meant that action and movement are not accepted but they are accepted as the Divine Working which is leading to ends which the mind may not always see at once, but the soul divines through all the supreme purpose and the hidden guidance.

Of course, there is afterwards an experience in which the two sides of the Divine Whole, the Witness and the Player blend together; but this poise of the spectator comes first and leads to that fuller experience. It gives the balance, the calm, the increasing understanding of soul and life and their deeper significances without which the full supramental experience cannot come.

30-12-1932

Cosmic Spirit and Cosmic Force

THERE is this much truth that the Cosmic Force works out everything and the Cosmic Spirit (Virat Purusha) supports her action. The Cosmic Force is a Power that works under the conditions of the Ignorance—it appears as the lower nature and the lower nature makes you do wrong things. The Divine allows the play of these forces so long as you do not

yourself want anything better. But if you are a sadhak, then you do not accept the play of the lower nature, you turn to the Divine Mother instead, and ask her to work through you instead of the lower nature. It is only when you have turned entirely in every part of your being to the Divine Mother and to her alone that the Divine will do all actions through you.

Three Steps to the Supreme Realisation

It refers to a certain stage when the consciousness is sometimes in activity and when not in activity is withdrawn in itself. Afterwards comes a stage when the Sachchidananda condition is there in work also. There is a still further stage when both are, as it were, one, but that is the Supramental. The two states are the Silent Brahman and the Active Brahman and they can alternate (1st stage), coexist (2nd stage), fuse (3rd stage)....

Certainly it (highest realisation, Sachchidananda) is realisable in works. Good Lord! How could the integral Yoga exist, if it were not?....

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Liberation of Consciousness and Instruments

WHAT you feel is the normal condition when the liberation takes place. The work of the senses etc. goes on as before, but the consciousness is different, so that one feels not only the sense of liberation, separation, etc., but that one is living in quite another world than that of the ordinary mind, life or senses. It is another consciousness with another knowledge and way of looking at things that begins. Afterwards as this consciousness takes possession of the instruments, there is a harmony of it with the sense and life; but these too become different, with a changed outlook, seeing the world no more as before but as if made of another substance with another significance.

12-12-1936

Yogic Concentration and Relaxation

THERE are two different states, that which the consciousness takes in concentration and that which it takes in relaxation—the latter is the ordinary consciousness (ordinary for the sadhak though not

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perhaps the ordinary consciousness of the average man), the former is what he is attaining to by Tapas of concentration in sadhana. To go into the Akshara and witness experiences from there is easy for the sadhak who has got so far. He can also concentrate and maintain the unification of the main aspects of his being, although with more difficulty—but a relaxation there brings him back to the relaxed ordinary consciousness. It is only when what is gained by sadhana becomes normal to the ordinary consciousness that this can be avoided. In proportion as this is done, it becomes possible not only to experience the truth subjectively, but make it manifest in action.

Overhead Planes

THE Self governs the diversity of its creation by its unity on all the planes from the Higher Mind upwards on which the realisation of the One is the natural basis of consciousness. But as one goes upward, the view changes, the power of consciousness changes, the Light becomes ever more intense and potent. Although the static realisation of Infinity and Eternity and the Timeless One remains the

ASCENT TO HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS

same, the vision of the workings of the One becomes ever wider and is attended with a greater instrumentality of Force and a more comprehensive grasp of what has to be known and done. All possible forms and constructions of things become more and more visible, put in their proper place, utilisable. Moreover, what is thought-knowledge in the Higher Mind becomes illumination in the Illumined Mind and direct intimate vision in the Intuition. But the Intuition sees in flashes and combines through a constant play of light—through revelations, inspirations, intuitions, swift discriminations. The Overmind sees calmly, steadily, in great masses and large extensions of space and time and relation, globally; it creates and acts in the same way—it is the world of the great Gods, the divine Creators. Only, each creates in his own way; he sees all but sees all from his own viewpoint. There is not the absolute supramental harmony and certitude. These, inadequately expressed, are some of the differences. I speak, of course, of these planes in themselves—when acting in the human consciousness they are necessarily much diminished in their working by having to depend on the human instrumentation of mind, vital and physical. Only when these are quieted, they get a fuller force and reveal more their character.

*Thought the Paraclete**

(I)

As thought rises in the scale, it ceases to be intellectual, becomes illumined, then intuitive, then over-mental and finally disappears seeking the last Beyond. The poem (*Thought the Paraclete*) does not express any philosophical thought, however; it is simply a perception of a certain movement, that is all.

“Pale blue” is the colour of the higher ranges of mind up to the intuition. Above it, it begins to become golden with the supramental Light.

14-1-1935

(2)

Thought is not the giver of Knowledge but the “mediator” between the Inconscient and the Superconscient. It compels the world born from the Inconscient to reach for a Knowledge other than the instinctive vital or merely empirical, for the Knowledge that itself exceeds thought; it calls for that

* A poem by Sri Aurobindo, *vide* “Collected Poems and Plays.”

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superconscient Knowledge, and prepares the consciousness here to receive it. It rises itself into the higher realms and even in disappearing into the supramental and Ananda levels is transformed into something that will bring down their powers into the silent self which its cessation leaves behind it.

Gold-red is the colour of the Supramental in the physical—the poem describes Thought in the stage when it is undergoing transformation and is about to ascend into the Infinite above and disappear into it. The ‘flame-word rune’ is the Word of the higher Inspiration, Intuition, Revelation which is the highest attainment of Thought.

30-12-1936

Mental Overmind to Supermind

THERE are many stages in the transition from mental overmind to supramentalised overmind and then from that to supramental overmind and from there to Supermind. Do not be in a hurry to say, “This is the last highest overmind.”

February, 1934

Supramental Overmind

SUPRAMENTAL overmind is still overmind—not a part of the true Supermind. One cannot get into the true Supermind (except in some kind of trance or Samadhi) unless one has first objectivised the overmind Truth in life, speech, action, external knowledge and not only experienced it in meditation and inner experience.

February, 1934

Overmind Power on Lower Planes

OVERMIND experience comes when one rises to the overmind plane and sees things as they are on that plane or as they look to the consciousness which sees the other planes from the overmind view. When one is in the mind, life or physical plane, then it is the overmind Influence that comes down and modifies the mind, life or physical workings in greater or less degree according to the possibilities or the thing to be done at the moment. It is not the sole power as it is in its own plane but works under mental, vital or physical conditions. Its power is more subjective than objective—it is easy for it to change our view

ASCENT TO HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS

and experience of the object and our knowledge about it, but not so easy for it to change the object or its nature or circumstances or the outward state of things in that plane.

October, 1933

Mental and Overmental Intuition

MENTAL intuitive knowledge catches directly some aspect of the truth but without any completeness or certitude and the intuition is easily mixed with ordinary mental stuff that may be erroneous; in application it may easily be a half-truth or be so misinterpreted and misapplied as to become an error. Also, the mind easily imitates the intuition in such a way that it is difficult to distinguish between a true or a false intuition. That is the reason why men of intellect distrust the mental intuition and say that it cannot be accepted or followed unless it is tested and confirmed by the intellect. What comes from the overmind intuition has a light, a certitude, an effective force of Truth in it that the mental intuition at its best even has not.

9-7-1933

III. DESCENT AND TRANSFORMATION

The Descent

THE descent is that of the powers of the higher consciousness which is above the head. It usually descends from centre to centre till it has occupied the whole being. But at the beginning the action is very variable. It is only when the Peace from above has not only descended but established itself in the whole system that there is a continuous action. The descent comes in order to transform the consciousness but the transformation takes time. It is not done all in a moment.

11-8-1934

Purpose of Descent

THE Force descends for two things:

- (1) To transform the nature.
 - (2) To carry on the work through the instrument.
- At first one is not conscious of either working,

DESCENT AND TRANSFORMATION

afterwards one becomes conscious of the Force working but not of how it works. Finally, one becomes conscious entirely and in detail.

19-5-1934

Descent of the Mother's Overhead Force

WHAT you feel streaming down must be the Mother's overhead Force. It flows usually from above the head and works at first in the mind centres (head and neck) and afterwards goes down into the chest and heart and then through the movement of the whole body.

It is the effect of this working which you must be feeling in the head up to the shoulders, The Force that comes down from above is the one that works to transform the consciousness into that of a higher spiritual being. Before that the Mother's Force works in the psychic, mental, vital and the physical plane itself to support, purify and psychically change the consciousness.

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Descent from Above

It is the universal experience of sadhaks that force or consciousness or Ananda like this first comes from above—or around—and presses on or surrounds the head, then it pierces the skull as it were and fills first the brain and forehead and then the whole head and descends occupying each centre till the whole system is full and replete. Of course there are, or can be, preliminary rushes occupying the whole body for a time or some part of the system most open and least resistant to the influence.

The Quiet Flow and Big Descents

THE quiet flow is necessary for permeating the lower parts. The big descents open the way and bring constant reinforcement and the culminating force at the end—but the quiet flow is also needed.

Descent of Peace and Force

SOME have this swaying of the body when the Peace or the Force begins to descend upon it, as it facilitates

DESCENT AND TRANSFORMATION

for it the reception. The swaying ceases usually when the body is accustomed to assimilate the descent.

The peace comes fully at the meditation time because the Mother's concentration at that time brings down the power of the higher consciousness and one can receive it if one is able to do so. Once it begins to come, it usually increases its force along with the receptivity of the sadhak until it can come at all times and under all conditions and stay longer and longer till it is stable. The sadhak on his side has to keep his consciousness as quiet and still as possible to receive it. The Peace, Power, Light, Ananda of the higher spiritual consciousness are there in all veiled above. A certain opening upwards is needed for it to descend—the quietude of the mind and a certain wide concentrated passivity to the descending Influence are the best conditions for the descent.

Descent of Knowledge from Overhead Planes

THE knowledge comes from above like the light and peace and everything else.

As the consciousness progresses, it comes from a higher and higher level. First it is the higher illumined mind that predominates, then the intuitive,

next the overmind, lastly the supermind; but the whole consciousness has to be sufficiently transformed before the supramental Knowledge can begin to come.

15-10-1934

Descent of Light

THERE are special forces of the Light and there is a play of them according to needs but the Light in itself can be lived in as much as one can live in Peace or Ananda.

As Peace and Ananda can pour through the whole system and finally stabilise themselves so that they are in the body, and the body and the whole being are in them—one might almost say, are that, are the Peace and Ananda—so it can be with Light. It can pour into the body, make every cell luminous, fix itself and surround on all sides in one luminous mass of Light.

18-10-1934

DESCENT AND TRANSFORMATION

Approach of Higher Consciousness to the Subconscious

It is the approach of the higher consciousness to the subconscious through the psychic and vital which are the connecting links. Without the vital the action would not be complete, without the psychic it would not be possible.

18-5-1934

Initial Opening and Full Descent

THE opening of the vital mind (or any part) does not mean that the vital mind is absolutely open or wholly converted so that there shall never again be any darkness or ignorance or error or resistance or anything else but the consciousness there. It only means that the higher consciousness is able to come down there and work and establish something of itself in that part. Each plane, one after the other, has to open initially in that way down to the physical. So long as this initial opening is not made in all the parts, there can be no complete and final descent of the higher consciousness anywhere. If the nervous being and other physical parts are not open, even the

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thinking mind cannot be finally open, for it can be affected by resistance, darkness, etc. from below. If the vital mind is open, that does not mean that it is open so wholly that it is already divine and is not feeling pride or other wrong movements.

As for the nervous being, it is part of the physical consciousness, below the physical mind and not above it—the nerves are part of the body.

18-6-1934

Condition of Complete Change

WITH the opening there must be the full self-giving to what comes down which is the condition of complete change. It is the last stage that is the real difficulty and it is there that everybody stumbles about till it is overcome.

Results of the Descent of Higher Consciousness in the Body

THESE are some of the effects of the descent of the higher Consciousness into the most physical. It

DESCENT AND TRANSFORMATION

brings light, consciousness, force, Ananda into the cells and all the physical movements. The body becomes conscious and vigilant and performs the right movements, obeying the higher will or else automatically by the force of the consciousness that has come into it. It becomes more possible to control the functions of the body and set right anything that is wrong, to deal with illness and pain, etc. A greater control comes over the actions of the body and even over happenings to it from outside, e.g., minimising of accidents and small mishaps. The body becomes a more effective instrument for work. It becomes possible to minimise fatigue. Peace, happiness, strength, lightness come in the whole physical system. These are the more obvious and normal results which grow as the consciousness grows but there are as many others that are possible. There is also the unity with the earth-consciousness, the constant sense of the Divine in the physical, etc...

It is, of course, not easy to make the physical entirely conscious in this way—for it is the seat of unconsciousness and obscurity and inertia—but a partial and sufficiently effective introduction of the higher Consciousness can be established as a basis and the rest of the ground conquered as its force increases on the body.

SECTION SIX

**SILENCING THE MIND:
VISIONS AND EXPERIENCES**

I. SILENCING THE MIND

II. SYMBOLS, VISIONS AND EXPERIENCES

I. SILENCING THE MIND

The Silent Mind

THE silent mind is a result of Yoga; the ordinary mind is never silent. . . . The thinkers and philosophers do not have the silent mind. It is the active mind they have; only, of course, they concentrate, so the common incoherent mentalising stops and the thoughts that rise or enter and shape themselves are coherently restricted to the subject or activity in hand. But that is quite a different matter from the whole mind falling silent.

Concentration and Meditation

(1)

CONCENTRATION is a gathering together of the consciousness and either centralising at one point or turning on a single object, e.g., the Divine; there can also be a gathered condition throughout the whole being, not at a point. In meditation it is not

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indispensable to gather like this, one can simply remain with a quiet mind thinking of one subject for observing what comes in the consciousness and dealing with it.

21-3-1936

(2)

Concentration means fixing the consciousness in one place or on one object and in a single condition. Meditation can be diffusive, e.g., thinking about the Divine, receiving impressions and discriminating, watching what goes on in the nature and acting upon it, etc.

13-3-1935

Best Help for Concentration

THE best help for concentration is to receive the Mother's calm and peace into your mind. It is there above you—only the mind and its centres have to open to it. It is what the Mother is pushing upon you in the evening meditation.

5-11-1934

SILENCING THE MIND

Silencing the Mind

(1)

LET us not exaggerate anything. It is not so much getting rid of mental activity as converting it into the right thing.... What has to be surpassed and changed is the intellectual reason which sees things from outside only, by analysis and inference—when it does not do it, rather by taking a hasty look and saying “so it is” or “so it is not”. But you can’t do that unless the old mental activity becomes a little quiet. A quiet mind does not involve itself in its thoughts or get run away with by them; it stands back, detaches itself, lets them pass, without identifying itself, without making them its own. It becomes the witness mind watching the thoughts when necessary, but able to turn away from them and receive from within and from above. Silence is good, but absolute silence is not indispensable, at least at this stage. I do not know that to wrestle with the mind to make it quiet is of much use, usually the mind gets the better at that game. It is this standing back, detaching oneself, getting the power to listen to something else other than the thoughts of the external mind that is the easier way. At the same time one can look up as it were, imaging to oneself the Force

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as there just above and calling it down or quietly expecting its help. That is how most people do it, till the mind falls gradually quiet or silent of itself, or else silence begins to descend from above. But it is important not to allow the depression or despair to come in because there is no immediate success; that can only make things difficult and stop any progress that is preparing.

16-1-1936

(2)

It is not easy to get into the Silence. That is only possible by throwing out all mental-vital activities. It is easier to let the Silence descend into you, i.e., to open yourself and let it descend. The way to do this and the way to call down the higher powers is the same. It is to remain quiet at the time of meditation, not fighting with the mind or making mental efforts to pull down the Power or the Silence but keeping only a silent will and aspiration for them. If the mind is active, one has to learn to look at it, drawn back and not giving any sanction from within, until its habitual or mechanical activities begin to fall quiet for want of support from within. If it is too persistent, a steady rejection

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without strain or struggle is the one thing to be done.

Peace and Calm

PEACE is more positive than calm—there can be a negative calm which is merely an absence of disturbance or trouble, but peace is always something positive bringing not merely a release as calm does but a certain happiness or Ananda of itself.

There is also a positive calm, something that stands against all things that seek to trouble, not thin and neutral like the negative calm, but strong and massive.

The Active and Passive Silence

THE passive silence is that in which the inner consciousness remains void and at rest, makes no reaction to outer things and forces.

The active silence is that in which there is a great force that goes out on things and forces without disturbing the silence.

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Silence and Experience

SILENCE does not mean absence of experiences. It is an inner silence and quietude in which all experiences can happen without producing any disturbance. It would be a great mistake to interfere with the images rising in you. It does not matter whether they are mental or psychic. One must have experience not only of the true psychic, but of the inner mental, inner vital and subtle physical worlds or planes of consciousness. The occurrence of the images is a sign that these are opening and to inhibit them would mean to inhibit the expansion of consciousness and experience without which this Yoga cannot be done.

True Perception and Formations of Vital Mind

THE pure inspiration and conception is something quite different—it comes from deep within or from high above. This is the lower vital mind at work making formations. When the calmness is there, all sorts of things may rise on the surface—they have not to be accepted, but simply looked at. In time the calmness will be so developed as to quell

SILENCING THE MIND

the vital and outer mind also and in that complete quietude the true perceptions will come.

8-6-1937

Quieting the Mechanical Mind

To be able to detach oneself from the action of the mechanical mind is the first necessity; it is easier then for the quiet and peace of mind to remain undisturbed by this action even if it occurs.

If the peace and silence continue to come down, they usually become so intense as to seize the physical mind also after a time.

22-1-1936

The Mechanical Mind

FROM what you describe it seems that you have got into contact with the mechanical mind whose nature is to go on turning round in a circle on the thoughts that come into it. This sometimes happens when the thinking mind is quiet. This is part of

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the physical mind and you should not be disturbed or alarmed by its rising up, but see what it is and quiet it down or get control of its movements.

3-3-1935

The Physical Mind

THE true thinking mind does not belong to the physical, it is a separate power. The physical mind is that part of the mind which is concerned with the physical things only—it depends on the sense-mind, sees only objects, external actions, draws its ideas from the data given by external things, infers from them only and knows no other Truth until it is enlightened from above.

1-3-1933

Escape from the Physical Mind—Prayer

WHEN one is living in the physical mind, the only way to escape from it is imagination. Incidentally,

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that is why poetry and art, etc. have so strong a hold. But these imaginations are often really shadows of supraphysical experience and once the barrier of the physical mind is broken or even swung a little open, there come the experiences themselves, if the temperament is favourable. Hence are born visions and other such phenomena—all those that are miscalled psychic phenomena.

As for prayer, no hard and fast rule can be laid down. Some prayers are answered, all are not. You may ask, why should not then all prayers be answered? But why should they be? It is not a machinery: put a prayer in the slot and get your asking. Besides, considering all the contradictory things mankind is praying for at the same moment, God would be in a rather awkward hole if he had to grant all of them; it wouldn't do.

8-10-1936

Explanation of a Message

I HAVE read again the message of the Yogi quoted in your letter but apart from the context nothing much or very definite can be made out of it. There are two statements which are clear enough:

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“In silence is wisdom”—it is in the inner silence of the mind that true knowledge can come; for the ordinary activity of the mind only creates surface ideas and representations which are not true knowledge. Speech is usually the expression of the superficial nature; therefore to throw oneself out too much in such speech wastes the energy and prevents the inward listening which brings the word of true knowledge.... “In listening you will win what you are thinking of” means probably that in silence will come the true thought-formations which can effectuate or realise themselves. Thought can be a force which realises itself, but the ordinary surface thinking is not of that kind; there is in it more waste of energy than in anything else. It is in the thought that comes in a quiet or silent mind that there is power.

“Talk less and gain power” has essentially the same meaning; not only a truer knowledge, but a greater power comes to one in the quietude and silence of a mind that, instead of bubbling on the surface, can go into its own depths and listen for what comes from a higher consciousness.

It is probably this that is meant; these are things known to all who have some experience of Yoga.

II. SYMBOLS, VISIONS AND EXPERIENCES

Four Kinds of Symbols

A SYMBOL, as I understand it, is the form on one plane that represents a truth of another. For instance, a flag is the symbol of a nation.... But generally all forms are symbols. This body of ours is a symbol of our real being and everything is a symbol of some higher reality. There are, however, different kinds of symbols:

(i) Conventional symbols: such as the Vedic Rishis formed with objects taken from their surroundings. The cow stood for light because the same word 'go' meant both ray and cow, and because the cow was their most precious possession which maintained their life and was constantly in danger of being robbed and concealed. But once created, such a symbol becomes alive. The Rishis vitalised it and it became a part of their realisation. It appeared in their visions as an image of spiritual light. The horse also was one of their favourite symbols, and a more easily adaptable one, since its force and energy were quite evident.

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(ii) What we might call Life-symbols, such as are not artificially chosen or mentally interpreted in a conscious deliberate way, but derive naturally from our day-to-day life and grow out of the surroundings which condition our normal path of living. To the ancients the mountain was a symbol of the path of Yoga, level above level, peak upon peak. A journey, involving the crossing of rivers and the facing of lurking enemies both animal and human, conveyed a similar idea. Nowadays I dare say we would liken Yoga to a motor-ride or a railway-trip.

(iii) Symbols that have an inherent appositeness and power of their own. Akasha or etheric space is a symbol of the infinite all-pervading eternal Brahman. In any nationality it would convey the same meaning. Also, the Sun stands universally for the supramental Light, the divine Gnosis.

(iv) Mental symbols, instances of which are numbers or alphabets. Once they are accepted, they too become active and may be useful. Thus geometrical figures have been variously interpreted. In my experience the square symbolises the Supermind. I cannot say how it came to do so. Somebody or some force may have built it before it came to my mind. Of the triangle, too, there are different explanations. In one position it can symbolise the three lower planes, in another the symbol is of the three higher

SYMBOLS, VISIONS AND EXPERIENCES

ones: so both can be combined together in a single sign. The ancients liked to indulge in similar speculations concerning numbers, but their systems were mostly mental. It is no doubt true that supramental realities exist which we translate into mental formulas such as Karma, Psychic evolution, etc. But they are, so to speak, infinite realities which cannot be limited by these symbolic forms, though they may be somewhat expressed by them; they might be expressed as well by other symbols, and the same symbol may also express many different ideas.

Symbolic Visions: Representative and Dynamic

It depends on the nature of the symbolic vision whether it is merely representative, presenting to the inner vision and nature (even though the outer mind has not the understanding, the inner can receive its effect) the thing symbolised, in its figure or whether it is dynamic. The Sun symbol, for instance, is usually dynamic. Again, among the dynamic symbols some may bring simply the influence of the thing symbolised, some indicate what is being done but not yet finished, some a formative experience that visits the consciousness, some a prophecy of something that

may or will or is soon about to happen. There are others that are not merely symbols but present actualities seen by the vision in a symbolic figure.

Colours in Dynamic Visions

WHEN the colours begin to take definite shapes in the visions, it is a sign of some dynamic work of formation in the consciousness: a square, for instance, means that some kind of creation is in process in some field of the being; the square indicates that the creation is to be complete in itself; while the rectangle indicates something partial and preliminary. The waves of colour mean a dynamic rush of forces and the star in such a context indicates the promise of the new being that is to be formed. The blue colour must here be the Krishna light, so it is a creation under the stress of Krishna consciousness. All these are symbols of what is going on in the inner being, in the consciousness behind and the results well up from time to time in the external or surface consciousness in such feeling as the awareness of a softening and opening which you had, devotion, joy, peace, Ananda, etc. When the opening is complete, there is likely to be a more direct consciousness

SYMBOLS, VISIONS AND EXPERIENCES

of the working that is going on behind, till it is no longer behind but in the front of the nature.

Vision and Darshan

SUBJECTIVE visions can be as real as objective sight—the only difference is that one is of real things in material space, while the others are of real things belonging to other planes down to the subtle physical; even symbolic visions are real in so far as they are symbols of realities. Even dreams can have a reality in the subtle domain. Visions are unreal only when these are merely imaginative mental formations, not representing anything that is true or was true or is going to be true.

This power of vision is sometimes inborn and habitual even without any effort of development, sometimes it wakes up of itself and becomes abundant or needs only a little practice to develop; it is not necessarily a sign of spiritual attainment, but usually when by practice of Yoga one begins to go inside or live within, the power of subtle vision awakes to a greater or less extent; but this does not always happen easily, especially if one has been habituated to live much in the intellect or in an outward vital consciousness.

I suppose what you are thinking of is "darshan", the self-revelation of the Deity to the devotee; but that is different, it is an unveiling of his presence temporary or permanent, and may come as a vision or may come as a close feeling of his presence which is more intimate than sight and a frequent or constant communication with him; that happens by deepening of the being into its inner self and growth of consciousness or by growth of the intensity of bhakti. When the crust of external consciousness is sufficiently broken by the pressure of increasing and engrossing bhakti, the contact comes.

3-6-1943

Darshan and Milan

SEEING is of many kinds. There is the superficial seeing which only erects or receives momentarily or for some time an image of the Being seen; that brings no change unless the inner bhakti makes it a means for change. There is also the reception of the living image in one of its forms into oneself—let us say, in the heart; that can have an immediate effect or initiate a period of spiritual growth. There is also

SYMBOLS, VISIONS AND EXPERIENCES

the seeing outside oneself in a more or less objective and subtle-physical or physical way.

As for the *milan*, the abiding union is within and that can be there at all times; the outer *milan* or contact is not usually abiding. There are some who often or almost invariably have the contact whenever they worship, the Deity may become living to them in the picture or other image they worship, may move and act through it; others may feel him always present, outwardly, subtle-physically, abiding with them where they live or in the very room, but sometimes this is only for a period. Or they may feel the Presence with them, see it frequently in a body (but not materially except sometimes), feel its touch or embrace, converse with it constantly—that is also a kind of *milan*. The greatest *milan* is one in which one is constantly aware of the Deity abiding in oneself, in everything in the world, holding all the world in him, identical with existence and yet supremely beyond the world—but in the world too one sees, hears, feels nothing but him, so that the very senses bear witness to him alone—and this does not exclude such special personal manifestations as those vouchsafed to K and his guru. The more ways there are of the union, the better.

28-4-1943

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Adesh and Darshan

ADESH and Darshan are elements of a stage of sadhana in which there is still much distance from the closer state of union. The mind and vital seek the contact through Darshan and the guidance through Adesha. What we aim at in our Yoga is the constant union and presence and control of the Divine at every moment. But on the mental or vital level this usually remains imperfect and there is much chance of error. It is by the supramentalisation that the perfect truth of this Divine union in action can come.

Receiving the Manifestation

ONE can receive the manifestation by any of the senses or by a feeling in the consciousness,—in the complete objective manifestation there can be sight, hearing, touch, everything.

29-4-1943

Value of Vision—Karmayoga—Systematic Sadhāna

(1)

HE made a mistake when he stopped the visions that were coming. Vision and hallucination are not the same thing. The inner vision is an open door on higher planes of consciousness beyond the physical mind which gives room for a wider truth and experience to enter and act upon the mind. It is not the only or the most important door, but it is one which comes readiest to very many if not most and can be a very powerful help. It does not come as easily to intellectuals as it does to men with a strong life-power or the emotional and the imaginative. It is true that the field of vision, like every other field of activity of the human mind, is a mixed world and there is in it not only truth but much half-truth and error. It is also true that for the rash and unwary to enter into it may bring confusion and misleading inspiration and false voices, and it is safer to have some sure guidance from those who know and have spiritual and psychic experience. One must look at this field calmly and with discrimination, but to shut the gates and reject this or other supraphysical experiences is to limit oneself and arrest the inner development.

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The line that seems to be natural to him is the Karmayoga and he is therefore right in trying to live according to the teaching of the Gita; for the Gita is the great guide on this path. Purification from egoistic movements and from personal desire and the faithful following of the best light one has are a preliminary training for this path, and so far as he has followed these things, he has been on the right way, but to ask for strength and light in one's action must not be regarded as an egoistic movement, for they are necessary in one's inner development.

Obviously, a more systematic and intensive sadhana is desirable or, in any case, a steady aspiration and a more constant preoccupation with the central aim could bring an established detachment even in the midst of outer things and outer activity and a continuous guidance. The completeness, the Siddhi of this way of Yoga—I speak of the separate path of Karma or spiritual action—begins when one is luminously aware of the Guide and the guidance and when one feels the Power working with oneself as the instrument and the participator in the divine work.

15-4-1946

SYMBOLS, VISIONS AND EXPERIENCES

(2)

I gather from his letter to you that he has been following a very sound method in his practice and has attained some good results. The first step in Karmayoga of this kind is to diminish and finally get rid of the ego-centric position in works, the lower vital reactions and the principle of desire. He must certainly go on on this road until he reaches something like its end. I would not wish to deflect him from that in any way.

What I had in view when I spoke of a systematic sadhana was the adoption of a method which would generalise the whole attitude of the consciousness so as to embrace all its movements at a time instead of working only upon details—although that working is always necessary. I may cite as an example the practice of the separation of the Prakriti and the Purusha, the conscious Being standing back detached from all the movements of Nature and observing them as witness and knower and finally as the giver (or refuser) of the sanction and at the highest stage of the development, the Ishwara, the pure will, master of the whole Nature.

By intensive sadhana I meant the endeavour to arrive at one of the great positive realisations which would be a firm base for the whole movement.

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observe that he speaks of sometimes getting a glimpse of some wide calm....A descent of this wide calm permanently into the consciousness is one of the realisations of which I was thinking. That he feels it at such times seems to indicate that he may have the capacity of receiving and retaining it. If that happened or if the Prakriti-Purusha realisation came, the whole sadhana would proceed on a strong permanent base with a new and entirely Yogic consciousness instead of the purely mental endeavour which is always difficult and slow. I do not however want to press these things upon him; they come in their own time and to press towards them prematurely does not always hasten their coming. Let him continue with his primary task of self-purification and self-preparation.

7-6-1946

Explanation of Some Inner Experiences

(1)

ABOUT your experiences:

(1) The sleep which you felt when meditating was not sleep but an inward condition of the con-

SYMBOLS, VISIONS AND EXPERIENCES

sciousness. When this inward condition is not very deep, one can be aware of various scenes, voices, etc. which belong not to the physical but to some inner plane of consciousness—their value or truth depends on the plane to which one reaches. Those of the surface are of no importance and one has simply to pass through them till one gets deeper.

(2) The fear, anger, depression, etc. which used to rise when making the Japa of the names came from a vital resistance in the nature (this resistance exists in everyone) which threw up these things because of the pressure on the vital part to change which is implied in sadhana. These resistances rise and then, if one takes the right attitude, slowly or quickly clear away. One has to observe them and separate oneself from them, persisting in the concentration and sadhana till the vital becomes quiet and clear.

(3) The things you saw (moon, sky, etc.) are due to the opening of the inner vision; this usually comes when the concentration begins to open up the inner consciousness of which this subtle vision is a part. This faculty of vision has its importance in the development of the inner being, and need not be discouraged; even though too much importance should not be attached to the things seen in the earlier stages.

(4) There are some, however, that are part of the growing spiritual experience, such as the sun you saw overhead and the piece of golden light—for these are signs of an opening within and symbolic. Both are symbols of the Divine Truth and Light and of one action of their influence.

(5) The most important experience, however, is that of the peace and quiet which comes with a good concentration. It is this that must grow and fix itself in the mind and vital and body—for it is this peace and quiet that make a firm basis for the sadhana.

28-2-1937

(2)

As to the dream, it was not a dream but an experience of the inner being in a conscious dream-state, *swapna-samadhi*. The numbness and the feeling of being about to lose consciousness are always due to the pressure or descent of a Force to which the body is not accustomed but feels strongly. Here it was not the physical body that was being directly pressed, but the subtle body, *sukshma sharira*, in which the inner being more intimately dwells and in which it goes out in sleep or trance or at the moment

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of death. But the physical body in these vivid experiences feels as if it was itself that was having the experience; the numbness was the effect in it of the pressure. The pressure on the whole body would mean a pressure on the whole inner consciousness, perhaps for some modification or change which would make it more ready for knowledge or experience; the third or fourth rib would indicate a region which belongs to the vital nature, the domain of the life-force, some pressure for a change there.

28-9-1936

(3)

Your recent experiences are of considerable importance: the triple condition of the being, the sense of the Divine everywhere, that of the Divine Child in the universe. The last two are self-evident in their significance. As to the triple condition, it indicates the proper direction of the realisation of the sadhana in three parts of the being. The mind has to emerge in the one infinite consciousness of the silent self which will then envelop the whole being; the heart has by adoration and love and surrender to live in the dynamic Divine and be its dwelling-place; the vital and physical (below the navel) have

to be the instruments of the Divine Will, instruments pure, surrendered, expressing nothing but that Will.

The Blue Light coming below the level of the Muladhara means that it has entered into the physical (physical-mental, physical-vital, material) consciousness. The two main obstacles here are the mechanical mind with its memories and desires of the past and the most outward sex-movements; these have to be overcome (especially the mechanical mind, for the other may be easily overcome if not supported by the vital proper) for the Light to possess all the physical consciousness. It is probably why it rose so strongly when the Light came to these parts.

9-4-1937

(4)

The important experience is that on the white ray in the heart—the white light and the illumining of the heart by the light is a thing of great power in this sadhana. The intuitions she speaks of are a sign of the inner consciousness growing in her—the consciousness which is necessary for Yoga.

28-7-1937

(5)

Your series of experiences are very interesting by the constant (though interspaced) development they illustrate. These two new significant elements have been added to the previous substance of the experience. The first is the very precise localisation of the uprush of the consciousness from the pit of the stomach—that is to say, from above the navel, the movement itself starting from the navel itself, even below it. The navel-centre (*nabhi-padma*) is the main seat of the centralised vital consciousness (dynamic centre) which ranges from the heart level (emotional) to the centre below the navel (lower vital, sensational desire centre). These three make the domain of the vital being. It is therefore clear that it was your inner vital being which had this experience, and its intensity and vehemence was probably due to the whole vital (or most of it) being awake and sharing in it this time. The experience itself was psychic in its origin, but was given a strong emotional-vital form in its expression. I may add, for completeness, that the centre of the psychic is behind the heart and it is through the purified emotions that the psychic most easily finds an outlet. All from the heart above is connected with the mental-vital and above it is the mind with

its three centres. One in the throat (the outward-going or externalising mind), one between the eyes or rather in the middle of the forehead (the centre of vision and will) and one above, communicating with the brain, which is called the thousand-petalled lotus, and where are centralised the highest thought and intelligence, communicating with the greater mind planes (illumined mind, intuition, overmind) above.

The second new significant feature is the self-manifestation of the inner mind; for it was your inner mind that was watching, observing and criticising the vital being's psychic experience. You found this clear division in you curious, but it will no longer seem curious once you know the perfectly normal divisibility of the different parts of the being. In the outer surface nature, mind, psychic, vital, physical are all jumbled together and it needs a strong power of introspection, self-analysis, close observation and disentanglement of the threads of thought, feeling and impulse to find out the composition of our nature and the relation and interaction of these parts upon each other. But when one goes inside as you have done, we find the sources of all this surface action and there the parts of our being are quite separate and clearly distinct from each other. We feel them indeed as different beings in us, and just as two people in a joint action can do,

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they too are seen to observe, criticise, help or oppose and restrain each other; it is as if we were a group-being, each member of the group with its separate place and function, and all directed by a central being who is sometimes in front above the others, sometimes behind the scenes. Your mental being was observing the vital and not quite easy about its vehemence, for the natural base of the mental being is calm, thoughtfulness, restraint, control and balance, while the natural turn of the vital is dynamism, energy thrown into emotion, sensation and action. All therefore was perfectly natural and in order.

18-9-1931

(6)

The navel is the vital centre in the physical body but the natural seat of the vital is in the vital sheath of the subtle body, which sheath it pervades; but for action through the gross body it is centred at the navel and below it.

(7)

The consciousness from which these experiences come is always there pressing to bring them in. The

reason why they do not come in freely or stay is the activity of the mind and vital always rushing about, thinking this, wanting that, trying to perform mountaineering feats on all the hillocks of the lower nature instead of nourishing a strong and simple aspiration and opening to the higher consciousness that it may come in and do its work. *Rasa* of poetry, painting or physical work is not the thing to go after. What gives the interest in Yoga is the *rasa* of the Divine and of the divine consciousness, which means the *rasa* of Peace, of Silence, of inner Light and Bliss, of growing inner Knowledge, of increasing inner Power, of the Divine Love, of all the infinite fields of experience that open to one with the opening of the inner consciousness. The true *rasa* of poetry, painting or any other activity is truly found when these activities are part of the working of the Divine Force in you and you feel it as that and you feel in it the joy of that working.

The condition you had of the inner being and its silence, separated from the surface consciousness and its little restless workings, is the first liberation, the liberation of Purusha from Prakriti and it is the fundamental experience. The day when you can keep it, you can know that the Yogic consciousness has been founded in you. This time it has increased in intensity, but it must also increase in duration.

SYMBOLS, VISIONS AND EXPERIENCES

These things do not “drop”—what you have felt is there in you all the time, but you did not feel it because you were living on the surface altogether and the surface is all crowd and clamour. But in all men there is this silent Purusha, base of the true mental being, the true vital being, the true physical being. It was by your prayer and aspiration that the thing came, to show you in what direction you must travel in order to have the true *rasa* of things, for it is only when one is liberated that one can get the real *rasa*. For after this liberation come others and among them the liberation and Ananda in action as well as in the static silence.

8-12-1934

Passing Experiences

At a certain stage of the sadhana, in the beginning (or near it) of the more intense experiences, it sometimes happens that there is the intense realisation of some aspect of the Divine, a sort of communion with it, and that is seen everywhere and all as that. It is a transitory phase and afterwards one gets the larger experience of the Divine in all its aspects and beyond all aspects. Throughout the experience there

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should be one part of the being that observes and understands—for, sometimes ignorant sadhaks are carried away by their experience and stop short there or fall into extravagance. It must be taken as an experience through which you are passing.

31-1-1934

Speaking of Experiences to Others

THE Light left you because you spoke of it to someone who was not an *adhikari*. It is safest not to speak of these experiences except to a Guru or to one who can help you. The passing away of an experience as soon as it is spoken of is a frequent happening and for that reason many Yogis make it a rule never to speak of what happens within them, unless it is a thing of the past or a settled realisation that nothing can take away. A settled permanent realisation abides, but these were rather things that come to make possible an opening in the consciousness to something more complete—to prepare it for realisation.

12-4-1936

SECTION SEVEN

POWERS AND PERSONALITIES—
DIVINE AND HOSTILE

*Falsehood and Ignorance—Powers and
Personalities—Emanations and Presence**

1. Falsehood and Ignorance

IGNORANCE means Avidya, the separative consciousness and the egoistic mind and life that flow from it and all that is natural to the separative consciousness and the egoistic mind and life. This Ignorance is the result of a movement by which the cosmic Intelligence separated itself from the light of the Supermind (the divine Gnosis) and lost the Truth,—truth of being, truth of divine consciousness, truth of force and action, truth of Ananda. As a result, instead of a world of integral truth and divine harmony created in the light of the divine Gnosis, we have a world founded on the part truths of an inferior cosmic Intelligence in which all is half-truth, half-error. It is this that some of the ancient thinkers like Shankara, not perceiving the greater Truth-Force behind, stigmatised as Maya and thought to

* This letter is intended to explain certain terms occurring in the book "The Mother" by Sri Aurobindo.

be the highest creative power of the Divine. All in the consciousness of this creation is either limited or else perverted by separation from the integral Light; even the Truth it perceives is only a half-knowledge. Therefore it is called the Ignorance.

Falsehood, on the other hand, is not this Avidya, but an extreme result of it. It is created by an Asuric power which intervenes in this creation and is not only separated from the Truth and therefore limited in knowledge and open to error, but in revolt against the Truth or in the habit of seizing the Truth only to pervert it. This Power, the dark Asuric Shakti or Rakshasic Maya, puts forward its own perverted consciousness as true knowledge and its wilful distortions or reversals of the Truth as the verity of things. It is the powers and personalities of this perverted and perverting consciousness that we call hostile beings, hostile forces. Whenever these perversions created by them out of the stuff of the Ignorance are put forward as the Truth of things, that is the Falsehood, in the Yogic sense, *mithya*, *moha*.

2. *Powers and Appearances*

These are the forces and beings that are interested in maintaining the falsehoods they have created in the world of the Ignorance and in putting them forward

as the Truth which men must follow. In India they are termed Asuras, Rakshasas, Pishachas (beings respectively of the mentalised vital, middle vital and lower vital planes) who are in opposition to the Gods, the Powers of Light. These too are Powers, for they too have their cosmic field in which they exercise their function and authority and some of them were once divine Powers (the former gods, *purve devah*, as they are called somewhere in the Mahabharata) who have fallen towards the darkness by revolt against the divine Will behind the cosmos. The word "appearances" refers to the forms they take in order to rule the world, forms often false and always incarnating falsehood, sometimes pseudo-divine.

3. *Powers and Personalities*

The use of the word Power has already been explained—it can be applied to whatever or whoever exercises a conscious power in the cosmic field and has authority over the world-movement or some movement in it. But the Four* of whom you speak are also Shaktis, manifestations of different powers of the Supreme Consciousness and Force,

* Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati.

the Divine Mother, by which she rules or acts in the universe. And they are at the same time divine personalities; for each is a being who manifests different qualities and personal consciousness-forms of the Godhead. All the greater Gods are in this way personalities of the Divine—one Consciousness playing in many personalities, *ekam sat bahudhā*. Even in the human being there are many personalities and not only one, as used formerly to be imagined; for all consciousness can be at once one and multiple. "Powers and Personalities" simply describe different aspects of the same being; a Power is not necessarily impersonal and certainly it is not *avyaktam*, as you suggest,—on the contrary, it is a manifestation acting in the worlds of the divine Manifestation.

4. *Emanations*

Emanations correspond to your description of the Matrikas of whom you speak in your letter. An emanation of the Mother is something of her consciousness and power put forth from her which, so long as it is in play, is held in close connection with her and, when its play is no longer required, is withdrawn back into its source, but can always be put out and brought into play once more. But

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also the detaining thread of connection can be severed or loosened and that which came forth as an emanation can proceed on its way as an independent divine being with its own play in the world. All the Gods can put forth such emanations from their being, identical with them in essence of consciousness and power though not commensurate. In a certain sense the universe itself can be said to be an emanation from the Supreme. In the consciousness of the sadhak an emanation of the Mother will ordinarily wear the appearance, form and characteristics with which he is familiar.

In a sense the four Powers of the Mother may be called, because of their origin, her Emanations, just as the Gods may be called Emanations of the Divine, but they have a more permanent and fixed character; they are at once independent beings allowed their play by the Adya Shakti and yet portions of the Mother, the Mahashakti, and she can always either manifest through them as separate beings or draw them together as her own various Personalities and hold them in herself, sometimes kept back, sometimes at play, according to her will. In the Supramental plane they are always in her and do not act independently but as intimate portions of the Supramental Mahashakti and in close union and harmony with each other.

5. *Gods*

These four Powers are the Mother's cosmic god-heads, permanent in the world-play; they stand among the greater cosmic Godheads to whom allusion is made when it is said that the Mother as the Mahashakti of this triple world "stands there (in the Overmind plane) above the Gods." The Gods, as has already been said, are in origin and essence permanent Emanations of the Divine put forth from the Supreme by the Transcendent Mother, the Adya Shakti; in their cosmic action they are Powers and Personalities of the Divine, each with his independent cosmic standing, function and work in the universe. They are not impersonal entities but cosmic Personalities, although they can and do ordinarily veil themselves behind the movement of impersonal forces. But while in the Overmind and the triple world they appear as independent beings, they return in the Supermind into the One and stand there united in a single harmonious action as multiple personalities of the one Person, the Divine Purushottama.

6. *Presence*

It is intended by the word Presence to indicate the sense and perception of the Divine as a Being,

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felt as present in one's existence and consciousness or in relation with it, without the necessity of any further qualification or description. Thus, of the "ineffable Presence" it can only be said that it is there and nothing more can or need be said about it, although at the same time one knows that all is there, personality and impersonality, Power and Light and Ananda and everything else, and that all these flow from that indescribable Presence. The word may be used sometimes in a less absolute sense, but that is always the fundamental significance,—the essential perception of the essential Presence supporting everything else.

7. The Transcendent Mother

This is what is termed the Adya Shakti; she is the Supreme Consciousness and Power above the universe and it is by her that all the Gods are manifested, and even the Supramental Ishwara comes into manifestation through her—the Supramental Purushottama of whom the Gods are Powers and Personalities.

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Conversion of Gods

WHILE the Gods cannot be transformed, for they are tygal and not evolutionary beings, they can come for conversion, that is to say, to give up their own ideas and outlook on things and conform themselves to the higher Will and Supramental Truth of the Divine.

1-11-1934'

Tygal and Evolutionary Beings

(1)

AGAIN, what do you mean by a soul? My proposition simply meant that there is no existence which has not the support of something of the Divine behind it. But the word soul has various meanings according to the context; it may mean the Purusha supporting the formation of Prakriti, which we call a being, though the proper word would be rather becoming; it may mean, on the other hand, specifically the psychic being in an evolutionary creature like man; it may mean the spark of the Divine which

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has been put into Matter by the descent of the Divine into the material world and which upholds all evolving formations here. There is and can be no psychic being in a non-evolutionary creature like the Asura; there can be none in a god who does not need one for his existence. But what the god has is a Purusha and a Prakriti or Energy of nature of that Purusha. If any being of the typal worlds wants to evolve, he has to come down to earth and take a human body and accept to share in the evolution. It is because they do not want to do this that the vital beings try to possess men so that they may enjoy the materialities of physical life without having the burden of the evolution or the process of conversion in which it culminates. I hope this is clear and solves the difficulty.

(2)

The three stages you speak of are stages not of evolution but of the involution of the Divine in Matter. The Devas and Asuras are not evolved in Matter; for the typal being only a Purusha with its Prakriti is necessary—this Purusha may put out a mental and vital Purusha to represent it and according as it is centred in one or another it belongs to the mental or vital world. That is all.

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There is no essential difference anywhere, for all is fundamentally the essential Divine, the difference is in the manifestation. Practically we may say that the Jivatman is one of the Divine Many and dependent on the One; the Atman is the One supporting the Many. The psychic being does not merge in the Jivatman, it becomes united with it so that there is no difference between the eternal being supporting the manifestation from above and the same being supporting the manifestation from within it, because the psychic being has become fully aware of the play of the Divine through it. What is called merging takes place in the Divine Consciousness when the Jivatman feels itself so one with the Divine that there is nothing else.

17-11-1934

The Life Heavens and the Earth Spirit

WHERE do you find in "The Life Heavens"¹ that I say or anybody says the conditions on the earth are glorious and suited to the Divine Life? There is not

¹ A poem by Sri Aurobindo, vide *Collected Poems and Plays*.

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a word to that effect there! The Life Heavens are the heavens of the vital gods and there is there a perfect harmony but a harmony of the sublimated satisfied senses and vital desires only. If there is to be a Harmony, it must be of all the powers raised to their highest and harmonised together. All the non-evolutionary worlds are worlds limited to their own harmony like the Life Heavens. The Earth, on the other hand, is an evolutionary world, not at all glorious or harmonious even as a material world (except in certain appearances) but rather most sorrowful, disharmonious, imperfect. Yet in that imperfection is the urge towards a higher and more many-sided perfection. It contains the last finite which yet yearns to the supreme Infinite, (it is not satisfied by sense-joys precisely because in the conditions of the earth it is able to see their limitations). God is pent in the mire (mire is not glorious, so there is no claim to glory or beauty here), but that very fact imposes a necessity to break through that prison to a consciousness which is ever rising towards the heights. And so on. That is "deeper power", though not a greater actual glory or perfection. All that may be true or not to the mind, but it is the traditional attitude of Indian spiritual experience. Ask any Yogin, he will tell you that the Life Heavens are childish things; even gods,

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says the Purana, must come down to earth and be embodied there if they want *mukti*, giving up the pride of their limited perfection; they must enter into the last finite if they want to reach the last infinite. A poem is not a philosophical treatise or a profession of religious faith—it is the expression of a vision or an experience of some kind, mundane or spiritual. Here it is the vision of the Life Heavens, its perfection, its limitation and the counter-claim of the Earth or rather the Spirit or Power behind the earth-consciousness. It has to be taken at that, as an expression of a certain aspect of things, an expression of a certain kind of experience, not of a mental dogma. There is a deep truth behind it, though it may not be the whole truth of the matter. In the poem, also, there is no question of a divine life here, though that is hinted at as the inexpressed possible result of the ascent—because the Earth is not put aside (“Earth’s heart was felt beating below me still”); nevertheless the poem expresses only the ascent towards the Highest, far beyond the Life Heavens, and the Earth-Spirit claims that power and does not speak of any descent of a divine life.

19-7-1934

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Gods in the Universal Self

THE Gods are in the universal Self—if identified with the universal Self one can feel their presence there. Also there is the experience of microcosm (the universe in oneself) in which all that is in the macrocosm (the larger universe) is present. All these things are for experience, for knowledge and must be taken as such. No merely personal turn should be given to them.

November, 1933

Purusha and Cosmic Godheads

VAYU and Indra are cosmic godheads presiding over the action of cosmic principles—they are not the *manomaya purusha* or *pranamaya purusha* in each man.

The Purusha is an essential being supporting the play of Prakriti; the godhead (Indra, Vayu, etc.) is a dynamic being manifested in Prakriti for the works of the plane to which he belongs.

27-5-1933

Forms of Gods

THERE are no planes of manifestation without forms—for without form creation or manifestation cannot be complete. But the supraphysical planes are not bound to the forms like the physical. The forms there are expressive, not determinative. What is important in the vital plane is the force or feeling and the form expresses it. A vital being has a characteristic form but he can vary it or mask his true form under others. What is primary on the mental plane is the perception, the idea, the mental significance and the form expresses that and these mental forms too can vary—there can be many forms expressing an idea in different ways or on different sides of the idea. Form exists but it is more plastic and variable than in physical nature.

As to the gods, man can build forms which they will accept but these forms too are inspired into man's mind from the planes to which the god belongs. All creation has the two sides, the formed and the formless,—the gods too are formless and yet have forms, but a godhead can take many forms, here Maheshwari, there Pallas Athene. Maheshwari herself has many forms in her lesser manifestation, Durga, Uma, Parvati, Chandi, etc. The gods are

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not limited to human forms—man also has not always seen them in human forms only.

Attraction to Several Divine Personalities

AT S's conscientious hesitations between Krishna and Shiva and Shakti I could not help indulging in a smile. If a man is attracted by one form or two forms of the Divine, it is all right, but if he is drawn to several at a time he need not torment himself over it. A man of some development has necessarily several sides in his nature and it is quite natural that different aspects should draw or govern different personalities in him: he can accept them all and harmonise them in the One Divine and the One Adya Shakti of whom all are the manifestations.

27-3-1933

The Hostile Forces

THE hostile forces exist and have been known to Yogic experience ever since the days of the Veda

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and Zoroaster in Asia (and the mysteries of Egypt and the Cabbala) and in Europe also from old times. These things, of course, cannot be felt or known so long as one lives in the ordinary mind and its ideas and perceptions; for there, there are only two categories of influences recognisable, the ideas and feelings and actions of oneself and others and the play of environment and physical forces. But once one begins to get the inner view of things, it is different. One begins to experience that all is an action of forces, forces of Prakriti psychological as well as physical, which play upon our nature—and these are conscious forces or are supported by a consciousness or consciousnesses behind. One is in the midst of a big universal working and it is impossible any longer to explain everything as the result of one's own sole and independent personality. You yourself have at one time written that your crises of despair etc. came upon you as if thrown on you and worked themselves out without your being able to determine or put an end to them. That means an action of universal forces and not merely an independent action of your own personality, though it is something in your nature of which they make use. But you are not conscious, and others also, of this intervention and pressure at its source for the reason I state. Those who have developed the inner view of things on the vital plane

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have plenty of experience of the hostile forces. However, you need not personally concern yourself with them so long as they remain incognito.

One may have the experiences on the mental plane without this knowledge coming; for there mind and idea predominate and one does not feel the play of Forces—it is only in the vital that that becomes clear. In the mind plane they manifest at most as mental suggestions and not as concrete Powers. Also, if one looks at things with the mind only (even though it be the inner mind), one may see the subtle play of Nature-forces but without recognising the conscious intention which we call hostile.

1935

Perversion and Disharmony in the Evolution from the Inconscious

AN evolution from the Inconscious need not be a painful one if there is no resistance; it can be a deliberately slow and beautiful efflorescence of the Divine. One ought to be able to see how beautiful

outward Nature can be and usually is, although it is itself apparently "inconscient". Why should the growth of consciousness in inward Nature be attended by so much ugliness and evil spoiling the beauty of the outward creation? Because of a perversity born from the Ignorance, which came in with Life and increased in Mind—that is the Falsehood, the Evil that was born because of the starkness of the Inconscient's sleep separating its action from the luminosity of the secret Conscient that is all the time within it. But it need not have been so except for the overriding Will of the Supreme which meant that the possibilities of perversion by inconscience and ignorance should be manifested in order to be eliminated through being given their chance, since all possibility has to manifest somewhere: once it is eliminated, the Divine Manifestation in Matter will be greater than it otherwise could be, because it will combine all the possibilities involved in this difficult creation and not some of them as in an easier and less strenuous creation might naturally happen.

"From beauty to greater beauty, from joy to intenser joy, by an especial adjustment of the senses"—yes, that would be the normal course of a divine manifestation, however gradual, in Matter. "Discordant sound and offensive odour" are creations of

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a disharmony between consciousness and Nature and do not exist in themselves; they would not be present to a liberated and harmonised consciousness, for they would be foreign to its being, nor would they afflict a rightly developing harmonised soul and Nature. Even the "belching volcano, crashing thunderstorm and whirling typhoon" are in themselves grandiose and beautiful things and only harmful or terrible to a consciousness unable to meet or deal with them or make a pact with the spirits of Wind and Fire. You are assuming that the manifestation from the Inconscient must be what it is now and here and that no other kind of world of Matter was possible, but the harmony of material Nature in itself shows that it need not necessarily be a discordant, evil, furiously perturbed and painful creation—the psychic being, if allowed to manifest from the first in Life and Mind and lead the evolution instead of being relegated behind the veil, would have been the principle of a harmony ever outflowing: everyone who has felt the psychic at work within him, free of the vital intervention, can at once see that this would be its effect because of its unerring perception, true choice, harmonic action. If it has not been so, it is because the Dark Powers have made Life a claimant instead of an instrument. The reality of the Hostiles and the nature of their role and trend of their

endeavour cannot be doubted by any one who has had his inner vision unsealed and made their unpleasant acquaintance.

18-1-1937

Asuras

THE Asuras are really the dark side of the mental, or more strictly, of the vital mind plane. This mind is the very field of the Asuras. Their main characteristic is egoistic strength and struggle, which refuse the higher law. The Asura has self-control, *tapas* and intelligence, but all that for the sake of his ego. On the lower vital plane the corresponding forces we call the *Rakshasas* which represent violent passions and influences. There are also other kinds of beings on the vital plane which are called the *Pishachas* and *Pramathas*. They manifest more or less in the physico-vital.

On the physical plane the corresponding forces are obscure beings, more forces than beings, what the Theosophists call the elementals. They are not strongly individualised beings like the *Rakshasas* and *Asuras*, but ignorant and obscure forces working

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in the subtle physical plane. What we in Sanskrit call the *Bhutas* mostly come under this class. But there are two kinds of elementals, the one mischievous and the other not.

There are no Asuras on the higher planes where the Truth prevails, except in the Vedic sense—"the Divine in its strength". The mental and vital Asuras are only a deviation of that power.

Conversion of Asuras

As to Asuras, not many of them have shown signs of repentance or possibility of conversion up to now. It is not surprising that they should be powerful in a world of ignorance for they have only to persuade people to follow the established bent of their lower nature, while the Divine calls always for a change of nature. It is not to be wondered at that the Asura has an easier task and more momentary success in his combinations. But that temporary success does not bind the future.

11-2-1933

Adverse Forces and Fidelity to the Divine

You ask whether the adverse Force is stronger than the Divine Force. The implication is that a man has no responsibility for his action and whatever he does or however he errs and falls in consequence, the Divine Force is to blame. It may be so, but in that case there is no need or utility in doing sadhana. One has only to sit still and let the Adverse Force or the Divine Force do what they like! According to that theory the Devil was quite right in telling Christ "Cast thyself down from this mountain and let His angels come and upbear thee," and Christ was quite wrong in rejecting the suggestion and saying, "It is written 'Thou shalt not tempt (put to a test) the Lord thy God!' " He ought to have jumped and if he got smashed, it would only have proved that the adverse forces were greater than the Divine Force!

If an adverse Force comes, one has not to accept and welcome its suggestions, but to turn to the Mother and refuse to turn away from her. Whether one can open or not, one has to be loyal and faithful. Loyalty and fidelity are not qualities for which one has to do Yoga. They are very simple things which any man or woman who aspires to the Truth ought to be able to accomplish.

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It is what everybody should realise. It is the psychic fidelity that brings the power to stand against the Asuras and enables the Protection to work.

21-4-1937

Indirect Hostile Attacks

INDIRECT attacks are not of this kind, a violent rush and covering by hostile forces—they are done through covert suggestions, half-truth, half-falsehood, attempts to represent the falsehood in the garb of the Divine Truth or to mix the lower consciousness cleverly with the higher. Their attempt is to mislead by guile rather than to conquer by force.

30-11-1933

SECTION EIGHT

LOVE AND BHAKTI—
RELATIONSHIPS IN YOGA

- I. LOVE AND BHAKTI IN YOGA
- II. THE TRUE MOVEMENT OF DEVOTION
- III. HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN YOGA

I. LOVE AND BHAKTI IN YOGA

Importance of Bhakti in Yoga

IT is a misunderstanding to suppose that I am against Bhakti or against emotional Bhakti—which comes to the same thing, since without emotion there can be no Bhakti. It is rather the fact that in my writings on Yoga I have given Bhakti the highest place. All that I have said at any time which could account for this misunderstanding was against an unpurified emotionalism which, according to my experience, leads to want of balance, agitated and disharmonious expression or even contrary reactions and, at its extreme, nervous disorder. But the insistence on purification does not mean that I condemn true feeling and emotion any more than the insistence on a purified mind or will means that I condemn thought and will. On the contrary, the deeper the emotion, the more intense the Bhakti, the greater is the force for realisation and transformation. It is

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oftenest through intensity of emotion that the psychic being awakes and there is an opening of the inner doors to the Divine.

3-2-1932

Emotion in Sadhana

EMOTION is necessary in the Yoga and it is only the excessive emotional sensitiveness which makes one enter into despondency over small things that has to be overcome. The very basis of this Yoga is bhakti and if one kills one's emotional being, there can be no bhakti. So there can be no possibility of emotion being excluded from the Yoga.

20-10-1936

Vital and Psychic Emotion

It is only the ordinary vital emotions which waste the energy and disturb the concentration and peace that have to be discouraged. Emotion itself is not a

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bad thing; it is a necessary part of the nature, and psychic emotion is one of the most powerful helps to the sadhana. Psychic emotion, bringing tears of love for the Divine or tears of Ananda, ought not to be suppressed: it is only a vital mixture that brings disturbance in the sadhana.

State of Bhakti

BHAKTI is not an experience, it is a state of the heart and soul. It is a state which comes when the psychic being is awake and prominent.

Mental Knowledge and Bhakti

To know about the sadhana with the mind is not indispensable. If one has bhakti and aspires in the heart's silence, if there is the true love for the Divine, then the nature will open of itself, there will be the true experience and the Mother's power working within you, and the necessary knowledge will come.

14-3-1935

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Personal and Impersonal Divine

THERE is always the personal and the impersonal side of the Divine and the Truth and it is a mistake to think the impersonal alone to be true or important, for that leads to a void incompleteness in part of the being, while only one side is given satisfaction. Impersonality belongs to the intellectual mind and the static self, personality to the soul and heart and dynamic being. Those who disregard the personal Divine ignore something which is profound and essential.

In following the heart in its purer impulses one follows something that is at least as precious as the mind's loyalty to its own conceptions of what the Truth may be.

Mind and Heart

It is because it is the analysing mind that is active—that always brings a certain dryness; the higher mind or the intuition brings a much more spontaneous and complete knowledge—the beginning of the real *jnana* without this effort. The *bhakti* which you feel is psychic, but with a strong vital tinge; and it is the

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mind and the vital between them that bring in the opposition between the *bhakti* and the *jnana*. The vital concerned only with emotion finds the mental knowledge dry and without *rasa*, the mind finds the *bhakti* to be a blind emotion, fully interesting only when its character has been analysed and understood. There is no such opposition when the psychic and the higher-plane knowledge act together predominantly—the psychic welcomes knowledge that supports its emotion, the higher thought consciousness rejoices in the *Bhakti*.

22-1-1934

Bhakti and Atmajnana

SELF-SURRENDER at first comes through love and *bhakti* more than through *Atmajnana*. But it is true that with *Atmajnana* the complete surrender becomes more possible.

25-6-1935

The Vital's Difficulty

YOUR difficulty is that the vital has not yet arrived at the secret of the self-existent Ananda of love, the Ananda of love's own pure truth, the inner beauty of it for its own sake, the secret of the inner abiding ecstasy; it cannot yet believe that the thing exists. But it is travelling towards it and this feeling was probably a stage—a groping after a purer vital emotion on the way to the purest of all which is one with the Divine.

Ananda in the Vital

THE Ananda you describe is evidently that of the inner vital when it is full of the psychic influence and floods with it the external vital also. It is the true Ananda and there is nothing in it of the old vital nature. When the psychic thus uses the vital to express itself, this kind of intense ecstasy is the natural form it takes. This intensity and the old vital excitement are two quite different things and must not be confused together. Where there is the intensity with a pure and full satisfaction, contentment and

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tude, leaving no room for claim, demand or depressing reaction, that is the true vital movement.

6-12-1931

Vital Demand and Psychic Love

WHAT he describes is a vital demand of the ego for emotional self-satisfaction; it is Maya. It is not true love, for true love seeks for union and self-giving and that is the love one must bring to the Divine. This vital (so-called) love brings only suffering and disappointment; it does not bring happiness; it never gets satisfied and, even if it is granted something that it asks for, it is never satisfied with it.

It is perfectly possible to get rid of this Maya of the vital demand, if one wishes to do it, but the will to do it must be sincere. If he is sincere in his will, he will certainly get help and protection. He must get his basis changed from the vital to the psychic centre.

20-3-1932

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Rejection of Vital Mixture

I THINK it needful at this stage of your sadhana to repeat my previous warning about not allowing any vital mixture. It is the crudity of the unregenerated vital that prevents the psychic from remaining always at the front. You have now seen clearly the two different consciousnesses—the psychic and the vital. To get rid of the old vital nature is one of the pressing needs of your sadhana. You are trying to get rid of the vital attachments and to turn entirely to the Mother. At this juncture you must be careful not to allow the movements of the old vital nature to enter into your relations with the Mother; if you do, the vital will begin to play, to create demands and desires, and that would push your psychic being into the background and spoil the whole truth of your sadhana.

13-7-1931

Need of Reaching the Psychic

IT is quite true that by going above one can get out of all problems, for they no longer exist, but the problems are there below and it is difficult to be

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always above with so much unsolved and calling for solution. But just as one can go high above, so one can go deep within and it is this going deep within that is needed. What happened was at the surface of the emotional being and if one simply stays there the difficulties of the emotional can come, but what has to be done is not to stay on the surface but go deep within. For the psychic is there behind the emotional surface, deep behind the heart-centre. Once one reaches it, these things can no longer touch; what will be there is the inner peace and happiness, the untroubled aspiration, the presence or nearness of the Mother.

10-11-1936

Surface Vital and True Vital

THAT is the psychic aspiration, the psychic fire. Where the vital comes in is in the impatience for result and dissatisfaction if the result is not immediate. That must cease.

It is in the nature of the unregenerated vital part on the surface to do like that. The true vital is different, calm and strong and a powerful instrument

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submitted to the Divine. But for that to come forward it is necessary first to get this fixed poise above in the mind—when the consciousness is there and the mind calm, free and wide, then the true vital can come forward.

25-10-1933

Viraha

VIRAHA is a transitional experience on the plane of the vital seeking for the Spirit—there is no reason why it should not be possible at a quite early stage. It is the realisations without any uneasiness, realisations in pure Ananda, that belong to the more developed sadhanā.

7-3-1933

Abhiman

THE sooner you get rid of *abhiman* the better. Anyone who indulges *abhiman* puts himself under the

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influence of the hostile forces. *Abhiman* has nothing to do with true love; it is, like jealousy, a part of the vital egoism.

Mastery of Emotions

To indulge in the emotions, love, grief, sorrow, despair, emotional joy etc. for their own sake with a sort of mental-vital over-emphasis on them is what is called sentimentalism. There should be in deep feeling a calm, a control, a purifying restraint and measure. One should not be at the mercy of one's feelings and sentiments, but master of oneself always.

22-10-1933

II. THE TRUE MOVEMENT OF DEVOTION

Demand for Experience before Seeking the Divine

YOUR whole-hearted acceptance of the Vaishnava idea and Bhakti becomes rather bewildering when it is coupled with an insistence that love cannot be given to the Divine until one has experience of the Divine. For what is more common in the Vaishnava attitude than the joy of Bhakti for its own sake? "Give me Bhakti", it cries, "whatever else you may keep from me. Even if it is long before I can meet you, even if you delay to manifest yourself, let my Bhakti, my seeking for you, my cry, my love, my adoration be always there." How constantly the Bhakta has sung, "All my life I have been seeking you and still you are not there, but still I seek and cannot cease to seek and love and adore." If it were really impossible to love God unless you first experience him, how could this be? In fact, your mind seems to be putting the cart before the horse. One seeks after God first with persistence or with passion, one finds him afterwards, some sooner than others, but most after

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a long seeking. One does not find him first, then seek after him. Even a glimpse often comes only after long or fervent seeking. One has the love of God or at any rate some heart's desire for him and afterwards one becomes aware of God's love, its reply to the heart's desire, its response of the supreme joy and Ananda. One does not say to God, "Show your love from the first, shower on me the experience of yourself, satisfy my demand, then I will see whether I can love you so long as you deserve it." It is surely the seeker who must seek and love first, follow the quest, become impassioned for the Sought,—then only does the veil move aside and the Light appear and the Face manifest that alone can satisfy the soul after its long sojourn in the desert.

Then again you may say, "Yes, but whether I love or not, I want, I have always wanted and now I want more and more, but I get nothing." Yes, but wanting is not all. As you now begin to see, there are conditions that have to be met—like the purification of the heart. Your thesis was, "Once I want God, God must manifest to me, come to me, at least give glimpses of himself to me, the real, solid, concrete experience, not mere vague things which I can't understand or value. God's Grace must answer my call for it, whether I yet deserve it or not—or else there is no Grace." God's Grace

may indeed do that in certain cases, but where does the "must" come in? If God must do it, it is no longer God's Grace, but God's duty or an obligation or a contract or a treaty. The Divine looks into the heart and removes the veil at the moment which he knows to be the right moment to do it. You have laid stress on the Bhakti theory that one has only to call his name and he must reply, he must at once be there. Perhaps, but for whom is this true? For a certain kind of Bhakta surely who feels the power of the Name, who has the passion of the Name and puts it into his cry. If one is like that, then there may be the immediate reply—if not, one has to become like that, then there will be the reply. But some go on using the Name for years, before there is an answer. Ramakrishna himself got it after a few months, but what months! and what a condition he had to pass through before he got it! Still he succeeded quickly because he had a pure heart already—and that divine passion in it.

It is not surely the Bhakta but the man of knowledge who demands experience first. He can say, "How can I know without experience?" but he too goes on seeking like Tota Puri even though for thirty years, striving for the decisive realisation. It is really the man of intellect, the rationalist who says, "Let God, if he exists, prove himself to me first, then I will

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believe, then I will make some serious and prolonged effort to explore him and see what he is like."

All this does not mean that experience is irrelevant to sadhana—I certainly cannot have said such a stupid thing. What I have said is that the love and seeking of the Divine can be and ordinarily is there before the experience comes—it is an instinct, an inherent longing in the soul and it comes up as soon as certain coverings of the soul disappear or begin to disappear. The next thing I have said is that it is better to get the nature ready first (the purified heart and all that) before the "experiences" begin rather than the other way round and I base that on the many cases there have been of the danger of experiences before the heart and vital are ready for the true experience. Of course, in many cases there is a true experience first, a touch of the Grace, but it is not something that lasts and is always there but rather something that touches and withdraws and waits for the nature to get ready. But this is not in every case, not even in the majority of cases, I believe. One has to begin with the soul's inherent longing, then the struggle with the nature to get the temple ready, then the unveiling of the Image, the permanent Presence in the sanctuary.

9-3-1936

The Sunlit Path of Reliance

PEACE was the very first thing that the Yogis and seekers of old asked for and it was a quiet and silent mind—and that always brings peace—that they declared to be the best condition for realising the Divine. A cheerful and sunlit heart is the fit vessel for the Ananda and who shall say that Ananda, or what prepares it, is an obstacle to the Divine union? As for despondency, it is surely a terrible burden to carry on the way. One has to pass through it sometimes, like Christian of the *Pilgrim's Progress* through the Slough of Despond but its constant reiteration cannot be anything but an obstacle. The Gita specially says, "Practise the Yoga with an undespondent heart—*anirvinnena chetasa*." I know perfectly well that pain and suffering and struggle and excesses of despair are natural—though not inevitable on the way—not because they are helps but because they are imposed on us by the darkness of this human nature out of which we have to struggle into the Light. I do not suppose Ramakrishna or Vivekananda would have recommended the incidents you allude to as an example for others to follow—they would surely have said that faith, fortitude, perseverance were the better way. That after all was what they stuck to in the end in spite

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of these bad moments. . . . At any rate Ramakrishna told the story of Narada and the ascetic Yogi and Vaishnava Bhakta with approval of its moral. I put it in my own language but keep the substance: Narada on his way to Vaikuntha met a Yogi practising hard tapasya on the hills. "O Narada," cried the Yogi, "you are going to Vaikuntha and will see Vishnu. I have been practising terrific austerities all my life and yet I have not even now attained to him. Ask him at least for me when I shall reach him." Then Narada met a Vaishnava, a bhakta who was singing songs to Hari and dancing to his own singing, and he cried also: "O Narada, you will see my Lord Hari. Ask him when I shall reach him and see his face." On his way back Narada came first to the Yogi. "I have asked Vishnu," said the sage, "you will realise him after six more lives." The Yogi raised a cry of loud lamentation: "What! So many austerities! Such gigantic endeavours! And how hard to me is the Lord Vishnu!" Next Narada met again the bhakta and said to him: "I have no good news for you. You will see the Lord but only after a lakh of lives." But the bhakta leapt up with a great cry of rapture: "Oh, I shall see my Lord Hari! After a lakh of lives I shall see my Lord Hari! How great is the grace of the Lord!" And he began dancing and singing

in a renewed ecstasy. Then Narada said, "Thou hast attained. Today thou shalt see the Lord." Well, you may say: "What an extravagant story and how contrary to human nature!" Not so contrary as all that and in any case hardly more extravagant than the stories of Harishchandra and Shivi. Still, I do not hold up the bhakta as an example, for I myself insist on the realisation in this life and not after six or a lakh of births more. But the point of these stories is in the moral and surely when Ramakrishna told it, he was not ignorant that there was a sunlit path of Yoga. He even seems to say that it is the quicker way as well as the better. So the possibility of the sunlit path is not a discovery or original invention of mine. The very first books on Yoga I read more than thirty years ago spoke of the dark and sunlit way and emphasised the superiority of the latter over the former.

20-12-1941

The True Movement

THE true movement is a pure aspiration and surrender. After all, one has not a right to call on the Divine to manifest himself; it can come only as a

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response to a spiritual or psychic state of consciousness or to a long course of sadhana rightly done; or, if it comes before that or without any apparent reason, it is a Grace; but one cannot demand or compel Grace. Grace is something spontaneous which wells out from the Divine Consciousness as a free flow of its being. The bhakta looks for it, but he is ready to wait in perfect reliance—even if need be, all his life—knowing that it will come, never varying in his love and surrender because it does not come now or soon. That is the spirit of so many songs of devotees which you have sung yourself; I heard one such song from you in a record sometime ago and very beautiful it was and beautifully sung—"Even if I have not won Thee, O Lord, still I adore."

What prevents you from having that is the restless element of vital impatience and ever-recurring and persisting disappointment at not having what you want from the Divine. It is the idea, "I wish so much for it, surely I ought to have it, why is it withheld from me?" But wanting, however strongly, is not a passport to getting; there is something more to it than that. Our experience is that too much vital eagerness, too much insistence often blocks the way; it makes a sort of obstructing mass or a whirl of restlessness and disturbance which leaves no quiet space

for the Divine to get in or for the thing asked for to come. Often it does come, but when the impatience has been definitely renounced and one waits, quietly open, for whatever may be (or, for the time, not be) given. But so often when you are preparing the way for a greater progress in the true devotion, the habit of this vital element starts up and takes hold and interrupts the progress made.

The joylessness also comes from the vital. It is partly due to the disappointment but not solely; for it is a very common phenomenon that when there is a pressure from the mind and soul on the vital, it often gets a rajasic or tamasic vairagya instead of the sattwic kind, refuses to take joy in anything, becomes dry, listless or unhappy, or it says, "Well, why don't I get the realisation you promised me? I can't wait." To get rid of that, it is best, even while observing it, not to identify oneself with it; if the mind or some part of the mind sanctions or justifies, it will persist or recur. If sorrow there must be, the other kind you described in the previous letter is preferable: the sadness that has a sweetness in it—no despair, only the psychic longing for the true thing to come. That must come by the increase of the pure and true Bhakti.

5-6-1943

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Way out of the Impasse

As for the way out of the impasse you speak of, I know only of the quieting of the mind which makes meditation effective, purification of the heart which brings the Divine touch and in time the Divine Presence, humility before the Divine which liberates from egoism and pride of the mind and of the vital—the pride that imposes its own reasonings on the ways of the Spirit and the pride that refuses or is unable to surrender,—sustained persistence in the call within and reliance on the Grace above. Meditation, japa, prayer or aspiration from the heart can all succeed, if they are attended by these or at least some of these things. I fully believe that one who has the call in him cannot fail to arrive if he follows patiently the way towards the Divine.

I have surely never said that you should not want the Divine response. One does Yoga for that. What I have said is that you should not expect or insist on it at once or within an early time. It can come early or it can come late, but come it will if one is faithful in one's call: for one has not only to be sincere but to be faithful through all. If I deprecate insistence, it is because I have always found that it creates difficulties and delays owing

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to a strain and restlessness which are created in the nature and the despondencies and revolts of the vital when the insistence is not satisfied. The Divine knows best and one has to have trust in his wisdom and attune oneself with his will. Length of time is no proof of an ultimate incapacity to arrive: it is only a sign that there is something in oneself which has to be overcome, and if there is the will to reach the Divine, it can be overcome.

If one wishes to escape from life altogether, it can only be by the way of a complete inner renunciation or merging oneself in the Silence of the Absolute or by a bhakti that becomes absolute or by a Karmayoga that gives up one's own will and desires to the will of the Divine. I have said also that Grace can at any moment act suddenly, but over that one has no control, because it comes by an incalculable will which sees things that the mind cannot see. It is precisely the reason why one should never despair, that and also because no sincere aspiration to the Divine can fail in the end.

29-5-1936

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Logic of Yoga

THERE is only one logic in spiritual things: that when a demand is there for the Divine, a sincere call, it is bound one day to have its fulfilment. It is only if there is a strong insincerity somewhere, a hankering after something else—power, ambition etc.—which counterbalances the inner call that the logic is no longer applicable. In your case it is likely to come through the heart, through increase of bhakti or psychic purification of the heart: that is why I was pressing the psychic way upon you.

Do not allow these wrong ideas and feelings to govern you or your state of depression to dictate your decisions: try to keep a firm central will for the realisation; you can do so if you make up your mind to it, these things are not impossible. You will find that the spiritual difficulty disappears in the end like a mirage. It belongs to the physical self and, where the inner call is sincere, cannot hold even the outer consciousness always: its apparent solidity will dissolve.

You are no doubt right about asking for the bhakti, for I suppose it is the master claim of your nature: for that matter, it is the strongest motive force that sadhana can have and the best

means for all else that has to come. It is why I said that it is through the heart that spiritual experience must come to you.

21-5-1936

Insincerity—Vital Purification

You speak of insincerity in your nature. If insincerity means the unwillingness of some part of the being to live according to the highest light one has or to equate the outer with the inner man, then this part is always insincere in all. The only way is to lay stress on the inner being and develop in it the psychic and spiritual consciousness till that comes down in it which pushes out the darkness from the outer man also.

I have never said that the vital is to have no part in the love for the Divine, only that it must purify and ennoble itself in the light of the psychic being. The results of self-loving love between human beings are so poor and contrary in the end—that is what I mean by the ordinary vital love—that I want something purer and nobler and higher in the vital also for the movement towards the Divine.

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Central Sincerity

IT is true that a central sincerity is not enough except as a beginning and a base; the sincerity must spread as you describe through the whole nature. But still unless there is a double nature (without a central harmonising consciousness), the basis is usually sufficient for that to happen.

Yogic Capacity; the Inner and the Outer Being

WHEN one enters into the true (Yogic) consciousness then you see that everything can be done, even if at present only a slight beginning has been made; but a beginning is enough, since the Force, the Power are there. It is not really on the capacity of the outer nature that success depends, (for the outer nature all self-exceeding seems impossibly difficult), but on the inner being and to the inner being all is possible. One has only to get into contact with the inner being and change the outer view and consciousness from the inner; that is the work of the sadhana and it is sure to come with sincerity, aspiration and patience.

Approach to Krishna

As for Krishna, why not approach simply and straight? The simple approach means trust. If you pray, trust that he hears. If the reply takes long in coming, trust that he knows and loves and that he is wisest in the choice of the time. Meanwhile quietly clear the ground, so that he may not have to trip over stone and jungle when he comes. That is my suggestion and I know what I am saying—for whatever you may say, I know very well all human difficulties and struggles and I know of the cure. That is why I press always on the things that would minimise and shorten the struggles and difficulties,—the psychic turn, faith, perfect and simple confidence and reliance. These, let me remind you, are tenets of the Vaishnava Yoga. Of course, there is the other Vaishnava way which swings between yearning and despair—ardent seeking and the pangs of *viraha*. It is that you seem to be following and I do not deny that one can arrive by that as one can by almost any way, if followed sincerely. But then those who follow it find a *rasa* even in *viraha*, in the absence and the caprice of the Divine Lover. Some of them have sung that they have followed after him all their lives but always he has slipped away from their vision and even in that they find a *rasa* and never cease

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following. But you find no *rasa* in it. So you cannot expect me to approve of that for you. Follow after Krishna by all means, but follow with the determination to arrive: don't do it with the expectation of failure or admit any possibility of breaking off half-way.

1-11-1935

Krishnabhakti and Purification

I HAVE no objection at all to the worship of Krishna or the Vaishnava form of devotion, nor is there any incompatibility between Vaishnava Bhakti and my supramental Yoga. There is in fact no special and exclusive form of supramental Yoga: all ways can lead to the Supermind, just as all ways can lead to the Divine.

If you persevere, you cannot fail to get the permanent bhakti you want and the realisation you want, but you should learn to put an entire reliance on Krishna to give it when he finds all ready and the time come. If he wants you to clear out imperfections and impurities first, that is after all understandable. I don't see why you should not succeed

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in doing it, now that your attention is being so constantly turned on it. To see them clearly and acknowledge them is the first step, to have the firm will to reject them is the next, to separate yourself from them entirely so that if they enter at all it will be as foreign elements, no longer parts of your normal nature but suggestions from outside, brings their last state; even, once seen and rejected, they may automatically fall away and disappear; but for most the process takes time. These things are not peculiar to you; they are parts of universal human nature; but they can, do and will disappear.

16-9-1944

Krishna's Call—Adhikaribheda

As to the point that puzzles you, it only arises from a confusion between the feeling of a devotee and the observation of the observer. Of course, the devotee loves Krishna because Krishna is lovable and not for any other reason: that is his feeling and his true feeling. He has no time to bother his head about what in himself made him able to love; the fact that he does love is sufficient for him and he does not need

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to analyse his emotions. The Grace of Krishna consists for him in Krishna's loveliness, in his showing himself to the devotee, in his call, the cry of the flute. That is enough for the heart, or if there is anything more, it is the yearning that others or all may hear the flute, see the face, feel all the beauty and rapture of this love.

It is not the heart of the devotee but the mind of the observer that questions how it is that the Gopis were called or responded at once and others—the Brahmin women, for instance—were not called and did not respond at once. Once the mind puts the question, there are two possible answers: the mere will of Krishna without any reason, what the mind would call his absolute divine choice or his arbitrary divine caprice or else the readiness of the heart that is called: and that amounts to *adhikaribheda*. A third reply would be: circumstances, as for instance, "the parking off the spiritual ground into close preserves" as R puts it. But then how can circumstances prevent the Grace from acting? In spite of parking off it works: Christians, Mohammedans do answer to the Grace of Krishna. Tigers, ghouls must love if they see him, hear his flute? Yes, but why do some hear it and see him, others not? We are thrown back on two alternatives: Krishna's Grace calls whom it wills to call without any

determining reason for the choice or the rejection, it is all his mercy or else he calls the hearts that are ready to vibrate and leap up at his call—and even there he waits till the moment has come. To say that it does not depend on outward merit or appearance of fitness is no doubt true: the something that was ready to wake in spite, it may be, of many hard layers in which it was enclosed, may be something visible to Krishna and not to us. It was there perhaps long before the flute began to play, but Krishna was busy melting the hard layers so that the heart in its leap might not be pressed back by them when the awakening notes came. The Gopis heard and rushed out into the forest—the others did not or did they think it was only some rustic music or some rude cowherd-lover fluting to his sweetheart: not a call that learned and cultured or virtuous ears could recognise as the call of the Divine? There is something to be said after all for the *adhikaribheda*. But, of course, it must be understood in the large sense: some may have the *adhikar* for recognising Krishna's flute, some for the call of Christ, some for the dance of Shiva—to each his own way and his nature's answer to the Divine Call. *Adhikar* cannot be stated in rigid mental terms: it is something spiritual and subtle, something mystic and secret between the called and the Caller.

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As for the swelled head, the theory of Grace may no doubt contribute to it, though I should imagine that the said head never felt the Grace but only the magnanimity of its own ego. The swelling may come equally in the road of personal effort as by the craving for Grace. It is fundamentally not due to either, but to a natural predisposition to this kind of oedema.

15-1-1936

Sense of the Gopi-Symbol

THE Gopis are not ordinary people in the proper sense of the word: they are embodiments of a spiritual passion, extraordinary by their extremeness of love, personal devotion, unreserved self-giving. Whoever has that, however humble his or her position in other respects (learning, power of presentation, scholarship, external sanctity, etc.) can easily follow after Krishna and reach him: that seems to me the sense of the symbol of the Gopis. There are many other significances, of course—that is only one among the many.

4-1-1936

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Krishna's Caprice

CERTAINLY Krishna is credited with much caprice, difficult dealings and a playfulness (Lila!) which the played-with do not always immediately appreciate. But there is a reasoning as well as a hidden method in his caprices, and when he does come out of it and takes a fancy to be nice to you, he has a supreme attractiveness, charm and allurements which compensates and more than compensates for all you have suffered.

17-9-1944

Krishna's Love

IF Krishna was always and by nature cold and distant (Lord, what a discovery—Krishna of all people!), how could human devotion and aspiration come near him—he and it would soon be like the North and South Pole, growing icier and icier, always facing each other but never seeing because of the earth's bulge. Also, if Krishna did not want the human Bhakta as well as the Bhakta wanting him, who could get at him?—he would be always

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sitting on the snows of the Himalayas like Shiva. History describes him otherwise and he is usually charged with being too warm and sportive.

2-10-1944

Krishna's Light

I DO not know that I can answer your question about what K means by Krishna's Light. It is certainly not what is ordinarily meant by knowledge. He may mean the Light of the Divine Consciousness or the light that comes from it or he may mean the luminous being of Krishna in which all things are in their supreme truth,—the truth of knowledge, the truth of Bhakti, the truth of ecstasy and Ananda, everything is there.

There is also a manifestation of Light—the Upanishads speak of *Jyotirbrahma*, the Light that is Brahman. Very often the sadhak feels a flow of light upon him and around him or a flow of light invading his centres or even his whole being and body, penetrating and illumining every cell and in that light there grows the spiritual consciousness and one becomes open to all or many of its workings

and realisations. Appositely, I have a review of the book of Ramdas entitled "Vision" before me in which is described such an experience, got by the repetition of the Rama mantra, but if I understand rightly, after a long and rigorous self-discipline. "The mantra having stopped automatically, he beheld a small circular light before his mental vision. This yielded him thrills of delight. This experience having continued for some days, he felt a dazzling light like lightning flashing his eyes, which ultimately permeated and absorbed him. Now an inexpressible transport of bliss filled every pore of his physical frame." It does not always come like that—very often it comes by stages or at long intervals, at first, working on the consciousness till it is ready.

We speak here also of Krishna's light—Krishna's light in the mind, Krishna's light in the vital, etc. But it is a special light—in the mind it brings clarity, freedom from obscurity, mental error and perversion; in the vital it clears out all perilous stuff and where it is, there is a pure and divine happiness and gladness.

But why limit oneself, insist on one thing alone and shut out every other? Whether it be by Bhakti or by Light or by Ananda or by Peace or by any other means whatsoever that one gets the initial

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realisation of the Divine, to get it is the thing and all means are good that bring it.

If it is bhakti that one insists on, it is by the bhakti that it comes and bhakti in its fullness is nothing but an entire self-giving. But then all meditation, all tapasya, all means of prayer or mantra must have that as its end and it is when one has progressed sufficiently in that that the Divine Grace descends and the realisation comes and develops till it is complete. But the moment of its advent is chosen by the wisdom of the Divine alone and one must have the strength to go on till it arrives, for when all is truly ready it cannot fail to come.

10-9-1935

Krishna's Colour

VIOLET is the colour of the light of Divine Compassion, as also of Krishna's Grace. It is also the radiance of Krishna's protection. Blue is his special and significant colour, the colour of his aura when he manifests—that is why he is called *Nila Krishna*. The adjective does not mean that he was blue or dark in his physical body.

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External Worship

WHAT is meant by *bahyapuja* (external worship)? If it is purely external, then of course it is the lowest form; but if done with the true consciousness, it can bring the greatest possible completeness to the adoration by allowing the body and the most external consciousness to share in the spirit and act of worship.

28-4-1943

Worship in Integral Yoga

THERE is no restriction in this Yoga to inward worship and meditation only. As it is a Yoga for the whole being, not for the inner being only, no such restriction could be intended. Old forms of the different religions may fall away, but absence of all forms is not the rule of the sadhana.

17-9-1934

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Pranapratishta

WHAT you say is no doubt true, but it is better not to take away the support that may still be there for the faith of those who need such supports. These visions and images and ceremonies are meant for that. It is a spiritual principle not to take away any faith or support of faith, unless the persons who have it are able to replace it by something larger and more complete.

If the Pranapratishta brings down a powerful Presence, that may remain there long after the one who has brought it has left his body. Usually it is maintained by the bhakti of the officiant and the sincerity of belief and worship of those who come to the temple for adoration. If these fail, there is likely to be a withdrawal of the Presence.

12-4-1937

III. HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN YOGA

Transformation of Relationships in Supramental Yoga

YOU seem not to have understood the principle of this Yoga. The old Yoga demanded a complete renunciation extending to the giving up of the worldly life itself. This Yoga aims instead at a new and transformed life. But it insists as inexorably on a complete throwing away of desire and attachment in the mind, life and body. Its aim is to refund life in the truth of the spirit and for that purpose to transfer the roots of all we are and do from the mind, life and body to a greater consciousness above the mind. That means that in the new life all the connections must be founded on a spiritual intimacy and a truth quite other than any which supports our present connections. One must be prepared to renounce at the higher call what are spoken of as the natural affections. Even if they are kept at all, it can only be with a change which transforms them altogether. But whether they are to be renounced or kept and changed must be decided not by the personal desires but by the

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truth above. All must be given up to the Supreme Master of the Yoga.

The power that works in this Yoga is of a thorough-going character and tolerates in the end nothing great or small that is an obstacle to the Truth and its realisation.

True Foundation of Harmony

THE inner loneliness can only be cured by the inner experience of union with the Divine; no human association can fill the void. In the same way, for the spiritual life the harmony with others must be founded not on mental and vital affinities, but on the divine consciousness and the union with the Divine. When one feels the Divine and feels others in the Divine, then the real harmony comes. Meanwhile what there can be is the goodwill and unity founded on the feeling of a common divine goal and the sense of being all children of the Mother....Real harmony can come only from a psychic or a spiritual basis.

27-11-1935

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Personal Relations in Sadhana

THE idea that all sadhaks must be aloof from each other and at daggers drawn is itself a preconceived idea that must be abandoned. Harmony and not strife is the law of yogic living. This preconceived idea arises perhaps from the old notion of Nirvana as the aim; but Nirvana is not the aim here. The aim here is fulfilment of the Divine in life and for that, union and solidarity are indispensable.

The ideal of the Yoga is that all should be centred in and around the Divine and the life of the sadhaks must be founded on that firm foundation, their personal relations also should have the Divine for their centre. Moreover, all relations should pass from the vital to the spiritual basis with the vital only as a form and instrument of the spiritual—this means that, from whatever relations they have with each other, all jealousy, strife, hatred, aversion, rancour and other evil vital feelings should be abandoned as these can be no part of the spiritual life. So, also, all egoistic love and attachment will have to disappear—the love that loves only for the ego's sake and, as soon as the ego is hurt and dissatisfied, ceases to love or even cherishes rancour and hate. There must be a real living and lasting unity behind the love. It is under-

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stood of course that such things as sexual impurity must disappear also.

That is the ideal, but as for the way of attainment, it may differ for different people. One way is that in which one leaves everything else to follow the Divine alone. This does not mean an aversion for anybody any more than it means aversion for the world and life. It only means an absorption in one's central aim, with the idea that once that is attained it will be easy to found all relations on the true basis, to become truly united with others in the heart and the spirit and the life, united in the spiritual truth and in the Divine. The other way is to go forward from where one is, seeking the Divine centrally and subordinating all else to that, but not putting everything else aside, rather seeking to transform gradually and progressively whatever is capable of such transformation. All the things that are not wanted in the relation—sex impurity, jealousy, anger, egoistic demand—drop away as the inner being grows purer and is replaced by the unity of soul with soul and the binding together of the social life in the hoop of the Divine.

It is not that one cannot have relations with people outside the circle of the sadhaks, but there too if the spiritual life grows within, it must necessarily affect the relation and spiritualise it on the

sadhak's side. And there must be no such attachment as would make the relation an obstacle or a rival to the Divine. Attachment to family etc. often is like that and, if so, it falls away from the sadhak. That is an exigence which, I think, should not be considered excessive. All that, however, can be progressively done; a severing of existing relations is necessary for some, it is not so for all. A transformation, however gradual, is indispensable, severance where severance is the right thing to do.

10-11-1936

P. S. I must repeat also that each case differs—one rule for all is not practical or practicable. What is needed by each for his spiritual progress is the one desideratum to be held in view.

Necessary Ideals in Relations between Sadhaks

WELL, I have said already that quarrels, cuttings are not a part of sadhana: the clashes and friction you speak of are, just as in the outside world, rub-

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blings of the vital ego. Antagonisms, antipathies, dislikes, quarrellings can no more be proclaimed as part of sadhana than sex-impulses or acts can be part of sadhana. Harmony, goodwill, forbearance, equanimity are necessary ideals in the relation of sadhak with sadhak. One is not bound to mix, but if one keeps to oneself, it should be for reasons of sadhana, not out of other motives: moreover, it should be without any sense of superiority or contempt for others.....If somebody finds that association with another for any reason raises undesirable vital feelings in him or her—he or she can certainly withdraw from that association as a matter of prudence until he or she gets over the weakness. But ostentation of avoidance or public cuttings are not included in the necessity and betray feelings that equally ought to be overcome.

25-10-1936

Friendship in Yoga

(1)

FRIENDSHIP or affection is not excluded from the Yoga. Friendship with the Divine is a recognised

relation in the sadhana. Friendships between the sadhaks exist and are encouraged by the Mother. Only, we seek to found them on a surer basis than that on which the bulk of human friendships are insecurely founded. It is precisely because we hold friendship, brotherhood, love to be sacred things that we want this change—because we do not want to see them broken at every moment by the movements of the ego, soiled and spoiled and destroyed by the passions, jealousies, treacheries to which the vital is prone—it is to make them truly sacred and secure that we want them rooted in the soul, founded on the rock of the Divine. Our Yoga is not an ascetic Yôga: it aims at purity, but not at a cold austerity. Friendship and love are indispensable notes in the harmony to which we aspire. It is not a vain dream, for we have seen that even in imperfect conditions, when a little of the indispensable element is there at the very root, the thing is possible. It is difficult and the old obstacles still cling obstinately? But no victory can be won without a fixed fidelity to the aim and a long effort. There is no other way than to persevere.

9-10-1934

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(2)

In Yoga friendship can remain but attachment has to fall away or any such engrossing affection as would keep one tied to the ordinary life and consciousness.

(3)

As for turning all to the Divine, that is a counsel of perfection for those who don't care to carry any luggage. But otherwise friendship between man and man or man and woman or woman and woman is not forbidden, provided it is the true thing and sex does not come in and also provided it does not turn one away from the goal. If the central aim is strong, that is sufficient. . . . When I spoke of personal relation, I certainly did not mean pure indifference, for indifference does not create a relation: it tends to non-relation altogether. Emotional friendship need not be an obstacle.

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Spiritual Life and Marriage

REGARDING your question about a complementary soul and marriage, the answer is easy to give; the way of the spiritual life lies for you in one direction and marriage lies in quite another and opposite. All talk about a complementary soul is a camouflage with which the mind tries to cover the sentimental, sensational and physical wants of the lower vital nature. It is that vital nature in you which puts the question and would like an answer reconciling its desires and demands with the call of the true soul in you. But it must not expect a sanction for any such incongruous reconciliation from here. The way of the supramental Yoga is clear; it lies not through concession to these things,—not, in your case, through satisfaction, under a spiritual cover if possible, of its craving for the comforts and gratifications of a domestic and conjugal life and the enjoyment of the ordinary emotional desires and physical passions,—but through the purification and transformation of the forces which these movements pervert and misuse. Not these human and animal demands, but the divine Ananda which is above and beyond them and which the indulgence of these degraded forms would prevent from descending, is the great

HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN YOGA

thing that the aspiration of the vital being must demand in the sadhak.

Turning Away from the Past Vital Love

WHATEVER may be the glamour of a vital love, once it falls away and one gets to a higher level, it should be seen to have been not the great thing one imagined. To keep this exaggerated estimate of it is to hold the consciousness back from the pull towards the greater thing with which that cannot for a moment compare. If one keeps an exaggerated feeling like that for an inferior past, it must make it more difficult to develop the entire person for a higher future. It is indeed not the Mother's wish that anybody should look back in a spirit of enthusiastic appreciation to the old vital love. It was indeed "so little" in any true estimate of things. It is not at all a question of comparison or of extolling the vital passion of one at the expense of that of the other. It is the whole thing that must dwindle in its proportions and recede into the shadowy constructions of the past that have no longer any importance.

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Human and Divine Love

(1)

HUMAN love is mostly vital and physical with a mental support—it can take an unselfish, noble and pure form and expression only if it is touched by the psychic. It is true, as you say, that it is more usually a mixture of ignorance, attachment, passion and desire. But whatever it may be, one who wishes to reach the Divine must not burden himself with human loves and attachments, for they form so many fetters and hamper his steps, turning him away besides from the concentration of his emotions on the one supreme object of love.

There is such a thing as psychic love, pure, without demand, sincere in self-giving, but it is not usually left pure in the attraction of human beings to one another. One must also be on one's guard against the profession of psychic love when one is doing sadhana,—for that is most often a cloak and justification for yielding to a vital attraction or attachment.

Universal love is the spiritual founded on the sense of the One and the Divine everywhere and the change of the personal into a wide universal consciousness, free from attachment and ignorance.

HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN YOGA

Divine Love is of two kinds—the divine Love for the creation and the souls that are part of itself, and the love of the seeker and love for the Divine Beloved; it has both a personal and impersonal element, but the personal is free here from all lower elements or bondage to the vital and physical instincts.

13-12-1934

(2)

And let me say also that, as regards human love and divine love, I admitted the first as that from which we have to proceed and to arrive at the other, intensifying and transforming into itself, not eliminating, human love. Divine Love, in my view of it, is again not something ethereal, cold and far, but a love absolutely intense, intimate and full of unity, closeness and rapture using all the nature for its expression. Certainly, it is without the confusions and disorders of the present lower vital nature which it will change into something entirely warm, deep and intense; but that is no reason for supposing that it will lose anything that is true and happy in the elements of love.

SECTION NINE
DIVINE GRACE, PERSONAL EFFORT
AND
GURU'S HELP

Three Possibilities in Sadhana

THERE are three main possibilities for the sadhak—(1) To wait on the Grace and rely on the Divine, (2) To do everything himself like the Adwaitin and the Buddhist, (3) To take the middle path, go forward by aspiration and rejection etc. helped by the Force.

Divine Grace, Divine Compassion and Cosmic Law

I SHOULD like to say something about the Divine Grace—for you seem to think it should be something like a Divine Reason acting upon lines not very different from those of human intelligence. But it is not that. Also it is not a universal Divine Compassion either, acting impartially on all who approach it and acceding to all prayers. It does not select the righteous and reject the sinner. The Divine Grace came to aid the persecutor (Saul of Tarsus), it came to St. Augustine the profligate,

to Jagai and Madhai of infamous fame, to Bilwamangal and many others whose conversion might well scandalise the puritanism of the human moral intelligence; but it can come to the righteous also—curing them of their self-righteousness and leading to a purer consciousness beyond these things. It is a power that is superior to any rule, even to the Cosmic Law—for all spiritual seers have distinguished between the Law and Grace. Yet it is not indiscriminate—only it has a discrimination of its own which sees things and persons and the right times and seasons with another vision than that of the Mind or any other normal Power. A state of Grace is prepared in the individual often behind thick veils by means not calculable by the mind and when the state of Grace comes, then the Grace itself acts. There are these three powers: (1) The Cosmic Law, of Karma or what else; (2) the Divine Compassion acting on as many as it can reach through the nets of the Law and giving them their chance; (3) the Divine Grace which acts more incalculably but also more irresistibly than the others. The only question is whether there is something behind all the anomalies of life which can respond to the call and open itself with whatever difficulty till it is ready for the illumination of the Divine Grace—and that something must be not

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a mental and vital movement but an inner somewhat which can well be seen by the inner eye. If it is there and when it becomes active in front, then the Compassion can act, though the full action of the Grace may still wait attending the decisive decision or change; for this may be postponed to a future hour, because some portion or element of the being may still come between, something that is not yet ready to receive.

But why allow anything to come in the way between you and the Divine, any idea, any incident? When you are in full aspiration and joy, let nothing count, nothing be of any importance except the Divine and your aspiration. If one wants the Divine quickly, absolutely, entirely, that must be the spirit of approach, absolute, all-engrossing, making that the one point with which nothing else must interfere.

What value have mental ideas about the Divine, ideas about what he should be, how he should act, how he should not act—they can only come in the way. Only the Divine himself matters. When your consciousness embraces the Divine, then you can know what the Divine is, not before. Krishna is Krishna, one does not care what he did or did not do: only to see him, meet him, feel the Light, the Presence, the Love and Ananda is what matters.

So it is always for the spiritual aspiration—it is the law of the spiritual life.

8-5-1934

The Truth of Divine Grace

THERE can be no doubt about the Divine Grace. It is perfectly true also that if a man is sincere, he will reach the Divine. But it does not follow that he will reach immediately, easily and without delay. Your error is there, to fix for God a term, five years, six years, and doubt because the effect is not yet there. A man may be centrally sincere and yet there may be many things that have to be changed in him before realisation can begin. His sincerity must enable him to persevere always—for it is a longing for the Divine that nothing can quench, neither delay nor disappointment nor difficulty nor anything else.

26-12-1934

DIVINE GRACE, PERSONAL EFFORT & GURU'S HELP

The Mother's Help and Grace

THE Mother's help is always there for those who are willing to receive it. But you must be conscious of your vital nature, and the vital must consent to change. It is no use merely observing that it is unwilling and that, when thwarted, it creates depression in you. Always the vital nature is not at first willing and always when it is thwarted or asked to change, it creates this depression by its revolt or refusal of consent. You have to insist till it recognises the truth and is willing to be transformed and to accept the Mother's help and Grace. If the mind is sincere and the psychic aspiration complete and true, the vital can always be made to change.

15-7-1932

Faith in the Victory of Divine Grace

You must throw all that away. Such depression can make you shut to what Mother is giving you. There is absolutely no good reason for such an attitude. The existence of difficulties is a known thing in Yoga. That is no reason for questioning the final victory or the effectuality of the Divine Grace.

4-2-1932

Action of Divine Grace

“THE ordinary action of the Divine is a constant intervention within the actual law of things”—that may or may not be but is not usually called the Divine Grace. The Divine Grace is something not calculable, not bound by anything the intellect can fix as a condition,—though ordinarily some call, aspiration, intensity of the psychic being can awaken it, yet it acts sometimes without any apparent cause even of that kind.

1-6-1933

Working of Grace

It is not indispensable that the Grace should work in a way that the human mind can understand, it generally doesn't: it works in its own “mysterious” way. At first usually it works behind the veil, preparing things, not manifesting. Afterwards it may manifest, but the sadhak does not understand very well what is happening; finally, when he is capable of it, he both feels and understands or at least begins to do so. Some feel and understand

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from the first or very early; but that is not the ordinary case.

28-12-1934

Strength—Sincerity—Grace

THERE is nothing unintelligible in what I say about strength and Grace. Strength has a value for spiritual realisation, but to say that it can be done by strength only and by no other means is a violent exaggeration. Grace is not an invention, it is a fact of spiritual experience. Many who would be considered as mere nothings by the wise and strong have attained by Grace. Illiterate, without mental power or training, without strength of character and will, they have yet aspired and suddenly or rapidly grown into spiritual realisation, because they had faith or because they were sincere. I do not see why these facts which are facts of spiritual history and of quite ordinary spiritual experience should be discussed and denied and argued as if they were mere matters of speculation.

Strength, if it is spiritual, is a power for spiritual realisation; a greater power is sincerity; a greatest

power of all is Grace. I have said times without number that if a man is sincere, he will go through in spite of long delay and overwhelming difficulties. I have repeatedly spoken of the Divine Grace. I have referred any number of times to the line of the Gita:

“I will deliver you from all sin and evil, do not grieve.”*

27-12-1934

Tapasya and Grace

WHAT Brahmananda says about tapasya is, of course, true. If one is not prepared for labour and tapasya, control of the mind and vital, one cannot demand big spiritual gains—for the mind and vital will always find tricks and excuses for prolonging their own reign, imposing their likes and dislikes and staving off the day when they will have to become obedient instruments and open channels of the soul and spirit. Grace may sometimes bring undeserved or

* *aham tvām sarvaṇḍāpebhyo mokṣayisyāmi mā śucaḥ.*

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apparently undeserved fruits, but one can't demand Grace as a right and privilege—for then it would not be Grace. As you have seen, one can't claim that one has only to shout and the answer must come. Besides, I have always seen that there has been really a long unobserved preparation before the Grace intervenes, and also, after it has intervened, one has still to put in a good deal of work to keep and develop what one has got—as it is in all other things until there is the complete siddhi. Then of course labour finishes and one is in assured possession. So tapasya of one kind and another is not avoidable.

You are right again about the imaginary obstacles.... It is why we always express depreciation of mental constructions and vital formations—because they are the defence-works mind and vital throw up against their capture by the Divine. However, the first thing is to become conscious of all that as you have now become,—the secret is to be firm in knocking it all down and making a *tabula rasa*, a foundation of calm, peace, happy openness for the true building.

3-11-1935

Reliance and Effort

ONE must rely on the Divine and yet do some enabling sadhana—the Divine gives the fruit not by the measure of the sadhana but by the measure of the soul's sincerity and its aspiration. (I mean by soul's sincerity its yearning after the Divine and its aspiration towards the higher life.) Also, worrying does no good—"I shall be this, I shall be that, what shall I be?" Say: "I am ready to be not what I want but what the Divine wants me to be,"—all the rest should go on that base.

Effort and Passivity

WELL, that is the idea in Yoga—that by a right passivity one opens oneself to something greater than one's limited self, and effort is only useful for getting that condition. Even in the ordinary life the individual is only an instrument in the hands of a universal Energy, though his ego takes the credit of all he does.

Action of Spiritual Force—Guru's Help

THE action of the Force does not exclude tapasya, concentration and the need of sadhana. Its action rather comes as an answer or a help to these things. It is true that it sometimes acts without them; it very often makes a response in those who have not prepared themselves and do not seem to be ready. But it does not always or usually act like that, nor is it a sort of magic that acts in the void or without any process. Nor is it a machine that acts in the same way on everybody or in all conditions and circumstances; it is not a physical but a spiritual Force and its action cannot be reduced to rules.

About the limitation of the power of the Guru to that of a teacher who shows the way but cannot help or guide, that is the conception of certain paths of Yoga such as the pure Adwaitin and the Buddhist which say that you must rely upon yourself and that no one can help you; but even the pure Adwaitin does in fact rely upon the Guru and the chief mantra of Buddhism insists on *sharanam* to Buddha. For other paths of sadhana, especially those which, like the Gita, accept the reality of the individual soul as an "eternal portion" of the Divine or which believe that Bhagawan and the bhakta are both real,

the help of the Guru has always been relied upon as an indispensable aid.

I don't understand the objection to the validity of Vivekananda's experience: it was exactly the realisation which is described in the Upanishads as a supreme experience of the Self. It is not a fact that an experience gained in samadhi cannot be prolonged into the waking state.

28-5-1945

Help of the Impersonal Brahman

You speak of the Impersonal as if it were a Person. The Impersonal is not He, it is It. How can an It guide or help? The Impersonal Brahman is inactive, aloof, indifferent, not concerned with what happens in the universe. Buddha's Permanent is the same. Whatever impersonal Truth or Light there is, you have to find it, use it, do what you can with it. It does not trouble itself to hunt after you. It is the Buddhist idea that you must do everything for yourself. . . .

May, 1935

DIVINE GRACE, PERSONAL EFFORT & GURU'S HELP

Need of Guru

YES, it is a defect in the vital, a lack of will to discipline. One has to learn from the master and act according to his instructions because the master knows the subject and how it is to be learnt—just as in spiritual things one has to follow a Guru who has the knowledge and knows the way. If one learns all by oneself, the chances are that one will learn all wrong. What is the use of a freedom to learn wrongly? Of course, if the pupil is more intelligent than the master, he will learn more than the master, just as a great spiritual capacity may arrive at realisation which the Guru has not—but even so the control and discipline in the early stages is indispensable.

22-12-1933

Fidelity to Guru—Faith and Belief

ALL true Gurus are the same, the one Guru, because all are the one Divine. That is a fundamental and universal truth. But there is also a truth of difference; the Divine dwells in different personalities

with different minds, teachings, influences so that he may lead different disciples with their special need, character, destiny by different ways to the realisation. Because all Gurus are the same Divine, it does not follow that the disciple does well if he leaves the one meant for him to follow another. Fidelity to the Guru is demanded of every disciple, according to the Indian tradition. "All are the same" is a spiritual truth, but you cannot convert it indiscriminately into action; you cannot deal with all persons in the same way because they are the one Brahman: if one did, the result pragmatically would be an awful mess. It is a rigid mental logic that makes the difficulty but in spiritual matters mental logic easily blunders; intuition, faith, a plastic spiritual reason are here the only guides.

As for faith, faith in the spiritual sense is not a mental belief which can waver and change. It can wear that form in the mind, but that belief is not the faith itself, it is only the external form. Just as the body, the external form, can change but the spirit remains the same, so it is here. Faith is a certitude in the soul which does not depend on reasoning, on this or that mental idea, on circumstances, on this or that passing condition of the mind or the vital or the body. It may be hidden, eclipsed, may even seem to be quenched, but it appears again after

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the storm or the eclipse; it is seen burning still in the soul when one has thought that it was extinguished for ever. The mind may be a shifting sea of doubts and yet that faith may be there within and, if so, it will keep even the doubt-racked mind in the way so that it goes on in spite of itself towards its destined goal. Faith is a spiritual certitude of the spiritual, the divine, the soul's ideal, something that clings to that even when it is not fulfilled in life, even when the immediate facts or the persistent circumstances seem to deny it. This is a common experience in the life of the human being; if it were not so, man would be the plaything of a changing mind or a sport of circumstances.

8-10-1945

Modern Mind and Yoga—Defects of the Human Guru

It does not strike me that K's letters are admirable as an *aperçu* of current thoughts and general tendencies; it was rather his power to withdraw so completely from these thoughts and tendencies and look from a new (for him) and abiding source of

knowledge that impressed me as admirable. If he had remained interested and in touch with them, I do not suppose he would have done better with them than Romain Rolland or another. But he has gone to the Yoga-view from them, the summit-view, and it is the readiness with which he has been able to do it that struck me.

I would explain his progressing so far not by his own superiority in the sense of a general fitness for Yoga as by the quickness and completeness with which he has taken inwardly the attitude of the Bhakta and the disciple. That is a rare achievement for a modern mind, be he European or 'educated' Indian, for the modern mind is analytic, dubitative, instinctively 'independent' even when it wants to be otherwise; it holds itself back and hesitates in front of the Light and Influence that comes to it; it does not plunge into it with a simple directness, crying, "Here I am, ready to throw from me all that was myself or seemed to be, if so I can enter into Thee; remake my consciousness into the Truth in Thy way, the way of the Divine." There is something in us that is ready for it, but there is this element that intervenes and makes a curtain of non-receptivity; I know by my own experience with myself and others how long it can make a road that could never, perhaps for us who seek the entire truth, have been short and

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easy. But still, we might have spared many wanderings and standstills and recoils and detours. All the more I admire the ease with which K seems to have surmounted this formidable obstacle.

I do not know if his Guru falls short in any respect, but with the attitude he has taken, the deficiencies, if any, do not matter. It is not the human defects of the Guru that can stand in the way when there is the psychic opening, confidence and surrender. The Guru is the channel or the representative or the manifestation of the Divine, according to the measure of his personality or his attainment; but whatever he is, it is to the Divine that one opens in opening to him; and if something is determined by the power of the channel, more is determined by the inherent and intrinsic attitude of the receiving consciousness, an element that comes out in the surface mind as simple trust or direct unconditional self-giving, and once that is there, the essential things can be gained even from one who seems to others than the disciple an inferior spiritual source, and the rest will grow up in the sadhak of itself by the Grace of the Divine, even if the human being in the Guru cannot give it. It is this that K appears to have done perhaps from the first; but in most nowadays this attitude seems to come with difficulty after much hesitation and trouble. In my own case I owe the first decisive turn

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of my inner life to one who was infinitely inferior to me in intellect, education, capacity and by no means spiritually perfect or supreme; but having seen a power behind him and decided to turn there for help, I gave myself entirely into his hands and followed with an automatic passivity the guidance. He himself was astonished and said to others that he had never met anyone before who could surrender himself so absolutely and without reserve or question to the guidance of the helper. The result was a series of transmuting experiences of such a radical character that he was unable to follow and had to tell me to give myself up in future to the Guide within, with the same completeness of surrender as I had shown to the human channel. I give this example to show how these things work; it is not in the calculated way the human reason wants to lay down, but by a more mysterious and greater law.

23-3-1932

Imperfections in the Guru

ONE can have a guru inferior in spiritual capacity (to oneself or to other gurus) carrying in him many

human imperfections and yet, if you have the faith, the bhakti, the right spiritual stuff, you can contact the Divine through him, attain to spiritual experiences, to spiritual realisation, even before the guru himself. Mark the "If", for that proviso is necessary; it is not every disciple who can do that with every guru. From a humbug you can get nothing but his humbuggery. He must have something in him which makes the contact with the Divine possible, something which works even if he is not in his outer mind quite conscious of its action. If there is nothing at all spiritual in him, he is not a guru, only a pseudo. Undoubtedly there can be considerable differences of spiritual realisation between one guru and another; but much depends on the inner relation between guru and *shishya*. One can go to a very great spiritual man and get nothing or only a little from him; one can go to a man of less spiritual capacity and get all he has to give—and more. The causes of this disparity are various and subtle; I need not expand on them here. It differs with each man. I believe the guru is always ready to give what can be given, if the disciple can receive. If he refuses to receive or behaves inwardly or outwardly in such a way as to make reception impossible or if he is not sincere or takes up the wrong attitude, then things become difficult. But if one is sincere and faithful

and has the right attitude and if the guru is a true guru, then after whatever time, it will come.

9-5-1943

*Spiritual Realisation
and Perfection of Outer Nature*

THE Yogi arrives at a sort of division in his being in which the inner Purusha, fixed and calm, looks at the perturbations of the outer man as one looks at the passions of an unreasonable child; that once fixed, he can proceed afterwards to control the outer man also; but a complete control of the outer man needs a long and arduous tapasya.

But even from a siddha Yogi you cannot always expect a perfect perfection: there are many who do not even care for the perfection of the outer nature which cannot be held as a disproof of their realisation and experience. If you so regard it, you have to rule out of court the greater number of Yogis of the past and the Rishis of the old time also.

I own that the ideal of my Yoga is different, but I cannot bind by it other spiritual men and their achievements and discipline. My own ideal is trans-

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formation of the outer nature, perfection as perfect as it can be. But you cannot say that those who have not achieved it or did not care to achieve it had no spirituality. Beautiful conduct—not politeness which is an outer thing, however valuable—but beauty founded upon a spiritual realisation of unity and harmony projected into life, is certainly part of the perfect harmony.

December, 1935

Perfection on the Spiritual Path

BUT when on earth were politeness and good society manners considered as a part or a test of spiritual experience or true yogic siddhi? It is no more a test than the capacity of dancing well or dressing nicely. Just as there are very good and kind men who are boorish and rude in their manners, so there may be very spiritual men (I mean here by spiritual men those who have had deep spiritual experiences) who have no grasp over physical life or action (many intellectuals too, by the way, are like that) and are not at all careful about their manners. I suppose I myself am accused of rude

and arrogant behaviour because I refuse to see people, do not answer letters, and a host of other misdemeanours. I have heard of a famous recluse who threw stones at anybody coming to his retreat because he did not want disciples and found no other way of warding off the flood of candidates. I at least would hesitate to pronounce that such people had no spiritual life or experience. Certainly, I prefer that sadhaks should be reasonably considerate towards each other, but that is for the rule of collective life and harmony, not as a siddhi of the Yoga or an indispensable sign of inner experience.

You write as if the moment one had any kind of spiritual experience or realisation, one must at once become a perfect person without defects or weaknesses. That is to make a demand which it is impossible to satisfy and it is to ignore the fact that spiritual life is a growth and not a sudden and inexplicable miracle. No sadhak can be judged as if he were already a siddha Yogi, least of all those who have only travelled a quarter or less of a very long path. Even great Yogis do not claim perfection and you cannot say that because they are not absolutely perfect, therefore their spirituality is false or of no use to the world. There are, besides, all kinds of spiritual men: some who are content with spiritual experience and do not seek after an

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outward perfection or progress, some who are saints, others who do not seek after sainthood, others who are content to live in the cosmic consciousness in touch or union with the All but allowing all kinds of forces to fly through them, e.g. in the typical description of the Paramhansa. The ideal I put before our Yoga is one thing but it does not bind all spiritual life and endeavour. The spiritual life is not a thing that can be formulated in a rigid definition or bound by a fixed mental rule; it is a vast field of evolution, an immense kingdom potentially larger than the other kingdoms below it, with a hundred provinces, a thousand types, stages, forms, paths, variations of the spiritual ideal, degrees of spiritual advancement. It is from the basis of this truth that things regarding spirituality and its seekers must be judged, if they are to be judged with knowledge. It is only by so understanding it that one can understand it truly, either in its past or in its future or put in their place the spiritual men of the past and the present or relate the different ideals, stages, etc. thrown up in the spiritual evolution of the human being.

December, 1935

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Essence of Surrender

THE essence of surrender is to accept whole-heartedly the influence and the guidance when the joy and peace come down, to accept them without question or cavil and let them grow; when the Force is felt at work, to let it without opposition, when the Knowledge is given, to receive and follow it, when the Will is revealed, to make oneself its instrument.

The Divine can lead, he does not drive. There is an internal freedom permitted to every mental being called 'man' to assent or not to assent to the Divine leading: how else can any real spiritual evolution be done?

13-5-1933

Freedom in Yoga

EACH person has his own freedom of choice up to a certain point—unless he makes the full surrender—and as he uses the freedom, has to take the spiritual or other consequences. The help can only be offered, not imposed. Silence, absence of frank

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confession, means a desire in the vital to go its own way. When there is no longer concealment, when there is the physical self-opening to the Divine, then the Divine can intervene.

Confession to Guru

WHEN one takes sincerely to surrender, nothing must be concealed that is of any importance for the life of the sadhana. Confession helps to purge the consciousness of hampering elements and it clears the inner air and makes for a closer and more intimate and effective relation between the Guru and the disciple.

Egoistic and Psychic Shyness

As for shyness, there are two kinds: one is egoistic, being ashamed of expressing the Truth or showing allegiance to it in ways which would not be understood by others, the other is a certain reserve, an

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unwillingness to expose one's deeper feelings to the gaze of others, the wish to keep sacred and secret the relations of love with the Divine—that is a psychic feeling.

16-3-1933

SECTION TEN

MENTAL DOUBTS
AND
SPIRITUAL FAITH

Mental Doubts and Spiritual Experience

I HAVE started writing about doubt, but even in doing so I am afflicted by the 'doubt' whether any amount of writing or of anything else can ever persuade the eternal doubt in man which is the penalty of his native ignorance. In the first place, to write adequately would mean anything from 60 to 600 pages, but not even 6000 convincing pages would convince doubt. For doubt exists for its own sake; its very function is to doubt always and, even when convinced, to go on doubting still; it is only to persuade its entertainer to give it board and lodging that it pretends to be an honest truth-seeker. This is a lesson I have learnt from the experience both of my own mind and of the minds of others; the only way to get rid of doubt is to take discrimination as one's detector of truth and falsehood and under its guard to open the door freely and courageously to experience.

All the same I have started writing, but I will begin not with doubt but with the demand for the Divine as a concrete certitude, quite as concrete as any physical phenomenon caught by the

senses. Now, certainly, the Divine must be such a certitude not only as concrete but more concrete than anything sensed by ear or eye or touch in the world of Matter; but it is a certitude not of mental thought but of essential experience. When the Peace of God descends on you, when the Divine Presence is there within you, when the Ananda rushes on you like a sea, when you are driven like a leaf before the wind by the breath of the Divine Force, when Love flowers out from you on all creation, when Divine Knowledge floods you with a Light which illumines and transforms in a moment all that was before dark, sorrowful and obscure, when all that is becomes part of the One Reality, when the Reality is all around you, you feel at once by the spiritual contact, by the inner vision, by the illumined and seeing thought, by the vital sensation and even by the very physical sense, everywhere you see, hear, touch only the Divine. Then you can much less doubt it or deny it than you can deny or doubt daylight or air or the sun in heaven—for of these physical things you cannot be sure but they are what your senses represent them to be; but in the concrete experiences of the Divine, doubt is impossible.

As to permanence, you cannot expect permanence of the initial spiritual experiences from the

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beginning—only a few have that and even for them the high intensity is not always there; for most, the experience comes and then draws back behind the veil waiting for the human part to be prepared and made ready to bear and hold fast its increase and then its permanence. But to doubt it on that account would be irrational in the extreme. One does not doubt the existence of air because a strong wind is not always blowing or of sunlight because night intervenes between dawn and dusk. The difficulty lies in the normal human consciousness to which spiritual experience comes as something abnormal and is in fact supernormal. This weak limited normality finds it difficult at first even to get any touch of that greater and intenser supernormal experience; or it gets it diluted into its own duller stuff of mental or vital experience, and when the spiritual does come in its own overwhelming power, very often it cannot bear or, if it bears, cannot hold and keep it. Still, once a decisive breach has been made in the walls built by the mind against the Infinite, the breach widens sometimes slowly, sometimes swiftly, until there is no wall any longer, and there is the permanence.

But the decisive experiences cannot be brought, the permanence of a new state of consciousness in which they will be normal cannot be secured if the

mind is always interposing its own reservations, prejudgments, ignorant formulas or if it insists on arriving at the divine certitude, as it would at the quite relative truth of a mental conclusion, by reasoning, doubt, enquiry and all the other paraphernalia of Ignorance feeling and fumbling around after Knowledge; these greater things can only be brought by the progressive opening of a consciousness quieted and turned steadily towards spiritual experience. If you ask why the Divine has so disposed it on this highly inconvenient basis, it is a futile question,—for this is nothing else than a psychological necessity imposed by the very nature of things. It is so because these experiences of the Divine are not mental constructions, not vital movements; they are essential things, not things merely thought but realities, not mentally felt but felt in our very underlying substance and essence. No doubt, the mind is always there and can intervene; it can and does have its own type of mentalising about the Divine, thoughts, beliefs, emotions, mental reflections of spiritual Truth, even a kind of mental realisation which repeats as well as it can some kind of figure of the higher Truth, and all this is not without value, but it is not concrete, intimate and indubitable. Mind by itself is incapable of ultimate certitude; whatever it believes, it can doubt; whatever it can affirm, it can

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deny; whatever it gets hold of, it can and does let go. That, if you like, is its freedom, noble right, privilege; it may be all you can say in its praise, but by these methods of mind you cannot hope (outside the reach of physical phenomena and hardly even there) to arrive at anything you can call an ultimate certitude. It is for this compelling reason that mentalising or enquiring about the Divine cannot by its own right bring the Divine. If the consciousness is always busy with small mental movements,—especially accompanied, as they usually are, by a host of vital movements, desires, prepossessions and all else that vitiates human thinking,—even apart from the native insufficiency of reason, what room can there be for a new order of knowledge, for fundamental experiences or for those deep and tremendous upsurgings or descents of the Spirit? It is indeed possible for the mind in the midst of its activities to be suddenly taken by surprise, overwhelmed, swept aside, while all is flooded with a sudden inrush of spiritual experience. But if afterwards it begins questioning, doubting, theorising, surmising what these might be and whether it is true or not, what else can the spiritual power do but retire and wait for the bubbles of the mind to cease?

I would ask one simple question of those who would make the intellectual mind the standard and judge

of spiritual experience. Is the Divine something less than mind or is it something greater? Is mental consciousness with its groping enquiry, endless argument, unquenchable doubt, stiff and unplastic logic something superior or even equal to the Divine Consciousness or is it something inferior in its action and status? If it is greater, then there is no reason to seek after the Divine. If it is equal, then spiritual experience is quite superfluous. But if it is inferior, how can it challenge, judge, make the Divine stand as an accused or a witness before its tribunal, summon it to appear as a candidate for admission before a Board of Examiners or pin it like an insect under its examining microscope? Can the vital animal hold up as infallible the standard of its vital instincts, associations and impulses, and judge, interpret and fathom by it the mind of man? It cannot, because man's mind is a greater power working in a wider, more complex way which the animal vital consciousness cannot follow. Is it so difficult to see, similarly, that the Divine Consciousness must be something infinitely wider, more complex than the human mind, filled with greater powers and lights, moving in a way which mere mind cannot judge, interpret or fathom by the standard of its fallible reason and limited half-knowledge? The simple fact is there that Spirit and Mind are not

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the same thing and that it is the spiritual consciousness into which the Yogin has to enter (in all this I am not in the least speaking of the Supermind), if he wants to be in permanent contact or union with the Divine. It is not then a freak of the Divine or a tyranny to insist on the mind recognising its limitations, quieting itself, giving up its demands, and opening and surrendering to a greater Light than it can find on its own obscurer level.

This doesn't mean that mind has no place at all in the spiritual life; but it means that it cannot be even the main instrument, much less the authority, to whose judgment all must submit itself, including the Divine. Mind must learn from the greater consciousness it is approaching and not impose its own standards on it; it has to receive illumination, open to a higher Truth, admit a greater power that doesn't work according to mental canons, surrender itself and allow its half-light half-darkness to be flooded from above till where it was blind it can see, where it was deaf it can hear, where it was insensible it can feel, and where it was baffled, uncertain, questioning, disappointed it can have joy, fulfilment, certitude and peace.

This is the position on which Yoga stands, a position based upon constant experience since men began to seek after the Divine. If it is not true,

then there is no truth in Yoga and no necessity for Yoga. If it is true, then it is on that basis, from the standpoint of the necessity of this greater consciousness that we can see whether doubt is of any utility for the spiritual life. To believe anything and everything is certainly not demanded of the spiritual seeker; such a promiscuous and imbecile credulity would be not only unintellectual, but in the last degree unspiritual. At every moment of the spiritual life until one has got fully into the higher light, one has to be on one's guard and to be able to distinguish spiritual truth from pseudo-spiritual imitations of it or substitutes for it set up by the mind and the vital desire. The power to distinguish between truths of the Divine and the lies of the Asura is a cardinal necessity for Yoga. The question is whether that can best be done by the negative and destructive method of doubt, which often kills falsehood but rejects truth too with the same impartial blow, or a more positive, helpful and luminously searching power can be found, which is not compelled by its inherent ignorance to meet truth and falsehood alike with the stiletto of doubt and the bludgeon of denial. An indiscriminateness of mental belief is not the teaching of spirituality or of Yoga; the faith of which it speaks is not a crude mental belief

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but the fidelity of the soul to the guiding light within it, a fidelity which has to remain till the light leads it into knowledge.

Mental Incomprehension of Ananda— Action of Divine Will and Grace in the World

WHATEVER the motive immediately pushing the mind or the vital, if there is a true seeking for the Divine in the being, it must lead eventually to the realisation of the Divine. The soul within has always the inherent (*ahaituki*) yearning for the Divine; the *hetu* or special motive is simply an impulsion used by it to get the mind and the vital to follow the inner urge. If the mind and the vital can feel and accept the soul's sheer love for the Divine for his own sake, then the *sadhana* gets its full power and many difficulties disappear; but even if they do not, they will get what they seek after in the Divine and through it they will come to realise something, even to pass beyond the limit of the original desire.... I may say that the idea of a joyless God is an absurdity, which only the ignorance of the mind could engender! The Radha love is not based upon any such thing, but means

simply that whatever comes on the way to the Divine, pain or joy, *milan* or *viraha*, and however long the sufferings may last, the Radha love is unshaken and keeps its faith and certitude pointing fixedly like a star to the supreme object of Love.

What is this Ananda, after all? The mind can see in it nothing but a pleasant psychological condition,—but if it were only that, it could not be the rapture which the bhaktas and the mystics find in it. When the Ananda comes into you, it is the Divine who comes into you, just as when the Peace flows into you, it is the Divine who is invading you, or when you are flooded with Light, it is the flood of the Divine himself that is around you. Of course, the Divine is something much more, many other things besides, and in them all a Presence, a Being, a Divine Person; for the Divine is Krishna, is Shiva, is the Supreme Mother. But through the Ananda you can perceive the Anandamaya Krishna, for the Ananda is the subtle body and being of Krishna; through the Peace you can perceive the Shantimaya Shiva; in the Light, in the delivering Knowledge, the Love, the fulfilling and uplifting Power you can meet the presence of the Divine Mother. It is this perception that makes the experiences of the bhaktas and mystics.

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so rapturous and enables them to pass more easily through the nights of anguish and separation; when there is this soul-perception, it gives to even a little or brief Ananda a force or value it could not otherwise have, and the Ananda itself gathers by it a growing power to stay, to return, to increase.

I cannot very well answer the strictures of Russell, for the conception of the Divine as an external omnipotent Power who has "created" the world and governs it like an absolute and arbitrary monarch—the Christian or Semitic conception—has never been mine; it contradicts too much my seeing and experience during thirty years of sadhana. It is against this conception that the atheistic objection is aimed,—for atheism in Europe has been a shallow and rather childish reaction against a shallow and childish exoteric religionism and its popular inadequate and crudely dogmatic notions. But when I speak of the Divine Will, I mean something different,—something that has descended here into an evolutionary world of Ignorance, standing at the back of things, pressing on the Darkness with its Light, leading things presently towards the best possible in the conditions of a world of Ignorance and leading it eventually towards a descent of a greater power of the Divine,

which will be not an omnipotence held back and conditioned by the law of the world as it is, but in full action and therefore bringing the reign of light, peace, harmony, joy, love, beauty and Ananda, for these are the Divine Nature. The Divine Grace is there ready to act at every moment, but it manifests as one grows out of the Law of Ignorance into the Law of Light, and it is meant, not as an arbitrary caprice, however miraculous often its intervention, but as a help in that growth and a Light that leads and eventually delivers. If we take the facts of the world as they are and the facts of spiritual experience as a whole, neither of which can be denied or neglected, then I do not see what other Divine there can be. This Divine may lead us often through darkness, because the darkness is there in us and around us, but it is to the Light he is leading and not to anything else.

Spiritual Faith and the Materialist's Denial

As for the faith-doubt question, you ardently give to the word faith a sense and a scope I do not attach to it. I will have to write not one but several

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letters to clear up the position. It seems to me that you mean by faith a mental belief which is in fact put before the mind and senses in the doubtful form of an unsupported asseveration. I mean by it a dynamic intuitive conviction in the inner being of the truth of supersensible things which cannot be proved by any physical evidence but which are a subject of experience. My point is that this faith is a most desirable preliminary (if not absolutely indispensable—for there can be cases of experiences not preceded by faith) to the desired experience. If I insist so much on faith—but even less on positive faith than on the throwing away of *a priori* doubt and denial—it is because I find that this doubt and denial have become an instrument in the hand of the obstructive forces...

Why I call the materialist's denial an *a priori* denial is because he refuses even to consider or examine what he denies but starts by denying it like Leonard Woolf with his "quack, quack" on the ground that it contradicts his own theories, so it can't be true. On the other hand, the belief in the Divine and the Grace and Yoga and the Guru etc. is not *a priori*, because it rests on a great mass of human experience which has been accumulating through the centuries and the millenniums as well as the personal intuitive perception. Therefore it

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is an intuitive perception which has been confirmed by the experience of hundreds and thousands of those who have tested it before me.

28-8-1934

Reason and Faith

BUT why on earth does your despairing friend want everybody to agree with him and follow his own preferred line of conduct or belief? That is the never-realised dream of the politician, or realised only by the violent compression of the human mind and life, which is the latest feat of the men of action. The "incarnate" Gods—Gurus and spiritual men of whom he so bitterly complains—are more modest in their hopes and are satisfied with a handful or, if you like, an Ashramful of disciples, and even these they don't ask for, but they come, they come. So are they not—these denounced "incarnates"—nearer to reason and wisdom than the political leaders?—unless of course one of them makes the mistake of founding a universal religion, but that is not our case. Moreover, he upbraids you for losing your reason in blind

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faith. But what is his own view of things except a reasoned faith? You believe according to your faith, which is quite natural, he believes according to his opinion, which is natural also, but no better, so far as the likelihood of getting at the true truth of things is in question. His opinion is according to his reason. So are the opinions of his political opponents according to their reason, yet they affirm the very opposite idea to his. How is reasoning to show which is right? The opposite parties can argue till they are blue in the face—they won't be anywhere nearer a decision. In the end he prevails who has the greater force or whom the trend of things favours. But who can look at the world as it is and say that the trend of things is always (or ever) according to right reason—whatever this thing called right reason may be? As a matter of fact there is no universal infallible reason which can decide and be the umpire between conflicting opinions; there is only my reason, your reason, X's reason, Y's reason multiplied up to the discordant innumerable. Each reasons according to his view of things, his opinion, that is, his mental constitution and mental preference. So what is the use of running down faith which after all gives something to hold on to amidst the contradictions of an enigmatic universe? If one can get at a

knowledge that knows, it is another matter; but so long as we have only an ignorance that argues,—well, there is a place still left for faith—even faith may be a glint from the knowledge that knows, however far off, and meanwhile there is not the slightest doubt that it helps to get things done. There's a bit of reasoning for you!—just like all other reasoning too, convincing to the convinced, but not to the unconvincible, that is, to those who don't accept the ground upon which the reasoning dances. Logic, after all, is only a measured dance of the mind, nothing else.

Human Intelligence and Spiritual Truth

IF one is blind, it is quite natural—for the human intelligence is after all rather an imbecile thing at its best—to deny daylight: if one's highest natural vision is that of glimmering mists, it is equally natural to believe that all high vision is but a mist or a glimmer. But Light exists for all that—and Spiritual Truth is more than a mist and a glimmer.

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Faith and Knowledge

FAITH is a thing that precedes knowledge, not comes after knowledge. It is a glimpse of a truth which the mind has not yet seized as knowledge.

It is not by the intellect that one can progress in the Yoga but by psychic and spiritual receptivity—as for knowledge and true understanding, it grows in sadhana by the growth of the intuition, not of the physical intellect.

10-9-1936

Intellect's Misrepresentation of Spiritual Experience

THE point about the intellect's misrepresentation of the "Formless" (the result of a merely negative expression of something that is inexpressibly intimate and positive) is very well made and hits the truth in the centre. No one who has had the Ananda of the Brahman can do anything but smile at the charge of coldness; there is an absoluteness of immutable ecstasy in it, a concentrated intensity of silent and inalienable rapture that is impossible even to suggest to anyone who has not had the experience.

The eternal Reality is neither cold nor dry nor empty; you might as well talk of the midsummer sunlight as cold or the ocean as dry or perfect fullness as empty. Even when you enter into it by elimination of form and everything else, it surges up as a miraculous fullness—that is truly the Purnam; when it is entered affirmatively as well as by negation, there can obviously be no question of emptiness or dryness! All is there and more than one could ever dream of as the all. That is why one has to object to the intellect thrusting itself in as the *subjanta* (all-knowing) judge: if it kept to its own limits, there would be no objection to it. But it makes constructions of words and ideas which have no application to the Truth, babbles foolish things in its ignorance and makes its constructions a wall which refuses to let in the Truth that surpasses its own capacities and scope.

11-2-1934

*Need of Patience—
Incomprehension of the Physical Mind*

“I WILL try again” is not sufficient; what is needed is to try always—steadily, with a heart free from

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despondency, as the Gita says, *anirvinnena chetasā*. You speak of five and a half years as if it were a tremendous time for such an object, but a Yogi who is able in that time to change radically his nature and get the concrete decisive experience of the Divine would have to be considered as one of the rare gallopers of the spiritual Way. Nobody has ever said that the spiritual change was an easy thing; all spiritual seekers will say that it is difficult but supremely worth doing. If one's desire for the Divine has become the master desire, then surely one can give one's whole life to it without repining and not grudge the time, difficulty or labour.

Again, you speak of your experiences as vague and dream-like. In the first place the scorn of small experiences in the inner life is no part of wisdom, reason or common sense. It is in the beginning of the sadhana and for a long time the small experiences that come on each other and, if given their full value, prepare the field, build up a preparatory consciousness and one day break open the walls to big experiences. But if you despise them with the ambitious idea that you must have either the big experiences or nothing, it is not surprising that they come once in a blue moon and cannot do their work. Moreover, all your experiences were not small. There were some like the stilling descent of a Power

in the body—what you used to call numbness—which any one with spiritual knowledge would have recognised as a first strong step towards the opening of the consciousness to the higher Peace and Light. But it was not in the line of your expectations and you gave it no special value. As for vague and dream-like, you feel it so because you are looking at them and at everything that happens in you from the standpoint of the outward physical mind and intellect which can take only physical things as real and important and vivid and to it inward phenomena are something unreal, vague and truthless. The spiritual experience does not even despise dreams and visions; it is known to it that many of these things are not dreams at all but experiences on an inner plane and if the experiences of the inner planes which lead to the opening of the inner self into the outer so as to influence and change it are not accepted, the experiences of the subtle consciousness and the trance consciousness, how is the waking consciousness to expand out of the narrow prison of the body and body-mind and the senses? For, to the physical mind untouched by the inner awakened consciousness, even the experience of the cosmic consciousness or the Eternal Self might very well seem merely subjective and unconvincing. It would think, "Curious, no doubt, rather interesting, but

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very subjective, don't you think? Hallucinations, yes!" The first business of the spiritual seeker is to get away from the outward mind's outlook and to look at inward phenomena with an inward mind to which they soon become powerful and stimulating realities. If one does that, then one begins to see that there is here a wide field of truth and knowledge, in which one can move from discovery to discovery to reach the supreme discovery of all. But the outer physical mind, if it has any ideas about the Divine and spirituality at all, has only hasty *a priori* ideas miles away from the solid ground of inner truth and experience.

I have not left myself time to deal with other matters at any length. You speak of the Divine's stern demands and hard conditions—but what severe demands and iron conditions you are laying on the Divine! You practically say to him, "I will doubt and deny you at every step, but you must fill me with your unmistakable Presence; I will be full of gloom and despair whenever I think of you or the Yoga, but you must flood my gloom with your rapturous irresistible Ananda; I will meet you only with my outer physical mind and consciousness, but you must give me in that the Power that will transform rapidly my whole nature." Well, I don't say that the Divine won't or can't do it, but if such

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a miracle is to be worked, you must give him some time and just a millionth part of a chance.

8-6-1934

Central Faith

I SPOKE of a strong central and, if possible, complete faith because your attitude seemed to be that you only cared for the full response—that is, realisation, the presence, regarding all else as quite unsatisfactory,—and your prayer was not bringing you that. But prayer in itself does not usually bring that at once—only if there is a burning faith at the centre or a complete faith in all the parts of the being. That does not mean that those whose faith is not so strong or surrender complete cannot arrive, but usually they have at first to go by small steps and to face the difficulties of their nature until by perseverance or tapasya they make a sufficient opening. Even a faltering faith and a slow and partial surrender have their force and their result, otherwise only the rare few could do sadhana at all. What I mean by the central faith is a faith in the soul or the central being behind, a faith which is there even when the mind

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and the vital despairs and the physical wants to collapse, and after the attack is over reappears and pushes on the path again. It may be strong and bright, it may be pale and in appearance weak, but if it persists each time in going on, it is the real thing. Fits of depression and darkness and despair are a tradition in the path of sadhana—in all Yogas oriental or occidental they seem to have been the rule. I know all about them myself—but my experience has led me to the perception that they are an unnecessary tradition and could be dispensed with if one chose. That is why whenever they come in you or others I try to lift up before them the gospel of faith. If still they come, one has to get through them as soon as possible and get back into the sun. Your dream of the sea was a perfectly true one—in the end the storm and swell do not prevent the arrival of the state of Grace in the sadhak and with it the arrival of the Grace itself. That, I suppose, is what something in you is always asking for—the supramental miracle of Grace, something that is impatient of the demand for tapasya and self-perfection and long labour. Well, it can come, it has come to several here after years upon years of flat failure and difficulty or terrible struggles. But it comes usually in that way—as opposed to a slowly developing Grace—after much difficulty and not at once. If you go on asking for

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it in spite of the apparent failure of response, it is sure to come....

9-4-1930

Faith and Realisation

No surrender to the psychic being is demanded, the surrender is to the Divine. One approaches the Divine through faith; concrete experience comes as a result of sadhana. One cannot demand a direct experience without doing anything to prepare the consciousness for it.

If one feels the call, one follows it—if there is no call, then there is no need to seek the Divine. Faith is sufficient to start with—the idea that one must first understand and realise before one can seek is a mental error and, if it were true, would make all sadhana impossible—realisation can come only as a result of sadhana, not as its preliminary.

7-12-1936

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Faith and Experience—Purification of Ego

As for experience being necessary for faith and no faith possible without it, that contradicts human psychology altogether. Thousands of people have faith before they have experience. The doctrine "No belief without experience" would be disastrous in spirituality or for that matter in the field of human action. The saint or bhakta have the faith in God long before they have the experience of God—the man of action has the faith in his cause long before his cause is crowned with success, otherwise they could not have been able to struggle persistently towards their end in spite of defeat, failure and deadly peril. I don't know what K means by true faith. For me faith is not intellectual belief but a function of the soul; when my belief has faltered, failed, gone out, the soul has remained steadfast, obstinately insisting, "This path and no other: the Truth I have felt is *the* Truth whatever the mind may believe." On the other hand, experiences do not necessarily lead to faith. One sadhak writes to me: "I feel the grace of the Mother descending into me, but I can't believe it because it may be my vital imagination." Another has experiences for years together, then falls down because he has, he says, "lost faith". All these things are not

my imagination, they are facts and tell their own tale.

I certainly did not mean a moral but a spiritual change—a moral man may be chock-full of ego, an ego increased by his own goodness and rectitude. Freedom from ego is spiritually valuable because then one can be centred, no longer in one's personal self, but in the Divine. And that too is the condition of bhakti. . . .

I don't know what is K's objection to emotion; it has its place, only it must not be always thrown outward but pressed inward so as to open fully the psychic doors. What you say is perfectly correct—I am glad you are becoming so lucid and clear-sighted, the result surely of a psychic change. Ego is a very curious thing and in nothing more than in its way of hiding itself and pretending it is not the ego. It can always hide even behind an aspiration to serve the Divine. The only way is to chase it out of all its veils and corners. You are right also in thinking that this is really the most important part of Yoga. The Rajayogis are right in putting purification in front of everything—as I was also right in putting it in front along with concentration in *The Synthesis of Yoga*. You have only to look about you to see that experiences and even realisations cannot bring one to the goal if this is not done—at any moment they can fall

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owing to the vital still being impure and full of ego.

March, 1935

Outer Faith and Inner Realisation

WHAT you express in the letter is the right way of thinking and seeing. The self-will of the mind wanting things in its own way and not in the Divine's way was a great obstacle. With that gone, the way should become much less rough and hard to follow.

The outer being can grow in faith, fidelity to the Divine, reverence, love, worship and adoration, great things in themselves,—though in fact these things too come from within,—but realisation can only take place when the inner being is awake with its vision and feeling of things unseen. Till then, one can feel the results of the divine help and, if one has faith, know that they are the work of the Divine; but it is only then that one can feel clearly the Force at work, the divine Presence, the direct communion.

26-9-1944

LETTERS OF SRĪ AUROBINDO

Sense of Superiority in Yoga— Faith and Belief

As for the sense of superiority, that is a little difficult to avoid when greater horizons open before the consciousness, unless one is already of a saintly and humble disposition. There are men like Nag Mahashaya (among Sri Ramakrishna's disciples) in whom spiritual experience creates more and more humility; there are others like Vivekananda in whom it creates a great sense of strength and superiority—European critics have taxed him with it rather severely; there are others in whom it fixes a sense of superiority to men and humility to the Divine. Each position has its value. Take Vivekananda's famous answer to the Madras Pundit who objected to one of his assertions saying, "But Shankara does not say so," to whom Vivekananda replied, "No, but I, Vivekananda, say so," and the Pundit was speechless. That "I, Vivekananda," stands up to the ordinary eye like a Himalaya of self-confident egoism. But there was nothing false or unsound in Vivekananda's spiritual experience. For this was not mere egoism, but the sense of what he stood for and the attitude of the fighter who, as the representative of something very great, could not allow himself to be put down or belittled. This is not to

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deny the necessity of non-egoism and of spiritual humility, but to show that the question is not so easy as it appears at first sight. For if I have to express my spiritual experiences I must do that with truth—I must record them, their *bhava*, their thoughts, feelings, extensions of consciousness which accompany them. What am I to do with the experience in which one feels the whole world in oneself or the force of the Divine flowing in one's being and nature or the certitude of one's faith against all doubts and doubters or one's oneness with the Divine or the smallness of human thought and life compared with this greater knowledge and existence? And I have to use the word I—I cannot take refuge in saying "This body" or "This appearance", especially as I am not a *Mayavadin*. Shall I not, therefore, fall into expressions which will make K.S. shake his head at my assertions as full of pride and ego? I imagine it would be difficult to avert it.

Another thing: it seems to me that you identify faith very much with the mental belief, but real faith is something spiritual, a knowledge of the soul. The assertions you quote in your letter are the hard assertions of mental belief leading to a great vehement assertion of one's mental creed and goal because they are one's own and must therefore be greater than those of others—an attitude

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which is universal in human nature. Even the atheist is not tolerant, but declares his credo of Nature and Matter as the only truth and on all who disbelieve it or believe in other things he pours scorn as unenlightened morons and superstitious half-wits. I bear him no grudge for thinking me that, but I note that this attitude is not confined to religious faith but is equally natural to those who are free from religious faith and do not believe in Gods or Gurus. You will not, I hope, mind my putting the other side of the question; I want to point out that there is the other side, that there is much more to be said than at first sight appears.

SECTION ELEVEN

DIFFICULTIES
OF
TRANSFORMATION

- I. NECESSITY OF TRANSFORMATION
- II. THE TRUE WAY OUT OF DIFFICULTIES
- III. TRANSFORMATION OF THE VITAL NATURE
- IV. VAIRAGYA
- V. REMOVAL OF EGO
- VI. CONVERSION OF SEX, FOOD AND SLEEP
- VII. MADNESS IN YOGA

I. NECESSITY OF TRANSFORMATION

Insufficiency of Human Life and Need of Transformation—Yogic Traditions and Supramental Yoga

You describe the rich human egoistic life you might have lived and you say “not altogether a wretched life, you will admit.” On paper it sounds even very glowing and satisfactory, as you describe it. But there is no real or final satisfaction in it, except for those who are too common or trivial to seek anything else, and even they are not really satisfied or happy,—and in the end, it tires and palls. Sorrow and illness, clash and strife, disappointment, disillusionment and all kinds of human suffering come and beat its glow to pieces—and then decay and death. That is the vital egoistic life as man has found it throughout the ages, and yet it is that which this part of your vital regrets. How do you fail to see, when you lay so much stress on the desirability of a merely human consciousness, that suffering is its badge? When the vital resists the change from the human into the divine consciousness, what it is defending is its right

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to sorrow and suffering and all the rest of it, varied and relieved no doubt by some vital or mental pleasures and satisfactions, but very partially relieved by them and only for a time. In your own case, it was already beginning to pall on you and that was why you turned from it. No doubt, there were the joys of the intellect and of artistic creation, but a man cannot be an artist alone; there is the outer, quite human, lower vital part and, in all but a few, it is the most clamorous and insistent part. But what was dissatisfied in you? It was the soul within, first of all, and through it the higher mind and the higher vital. Why then find fault with the Divine for misleading you when it turned to the Yoga or brought you here? It was simply answering to the demand of your own inner being and the higher parts of your nature. If you have so much difficulty and become restless, it is because you are still divided and something in your lower vital still regrets what it has lost or, as a price for its adhesion or a compensation—a price to be immediately paid down to it—asks for something similar and equivalent in the spiritual life. It refuses to believe that there is a greater compensation, a larger vital life waiting for it, something positive in which there shall not be the old inadequacy and unrest and final dissatisfaction. The foolishness is not in the divine guidance, but

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in the irrational and obstinate resistance of this confused and obscure part of you to the demand, made not only by this Yoga, but by all Yoga—to the necessary conditions for the satisfaction of the aspiration of your own soul and higher nature.

The “human” vital consciousness has moved always between these two poles, the ordinary vital life which cannot satisfy and the recoil from it to the ascetic solution. India has gone fully through that seesaw, Europe is beginning once more after a full trial to feel the failure of the mere vital egoistic life. The traditional Yogas—to which you appeal—are founded upon the movement between these two poles. On one side are Shankara and Buddha and most go, if not by the same road, yet in that direction; on the other are Vaishnava or Tantric lines which try to combine asceticism with some sublimation of the vital impulse. And where did these lines end? They fell back to the other pole, to a vital invasion, even corruption and a loss of their spirit. At the present day the general movement is towards an attempt at reconciliation, and you have alluded sometimes to some of the protagonists of this attempt and asked me my opinion about them, yours being unfavourable. But these men are not mere charlatans, and if there is anything wrong with them (on which I do not pronounce), it can only be

because they are unable to resist the magnetic pull of this lower pole of the egoistic vital desire-nature. And if they are unable to resist, it is because they have not found the true force which will not only neutralise that pull and prevent deterioration and downward lapse, but transform and utilise and satisfy in their own deeper truth, instead of destroying or throwing away, the life-force and the embodiment in Matter; for, that can only be done by the supermind power and by no other.

You appeal to the Vaishnava-Tantric traditions; to Chaitanya, Ramprasad, Ramakrishna. I know something about them and, if I did not try to repeat them, it is because I do not find in them the solution, the reconciliation I am seeking. Your quotation from Ramprasad does not assist me in the least—and it does not support your thesis either. Ramprasad is not speaking of an embodied, but of a bodiless and invisible Divine—or visible only in a subtle form to the inner experience. When he speaks of maintaining his claim or case against the Mother until she lifts him into her lap, he is not speaking of any outer vital or physical contact, but of an inner psychic experience; precisely, he is protesting against her keeping him in the external vital and physical nature and insists on her taking

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him on the psycho-spiritual plane into spiritual union with her.

All that is very good and very beautiful, but it is not enough: the union has indeed to be realised in the inner psycho-spiritual experience first, because without that nothing sound or lasting can be done; but also there must be a realisation of the Divine in the outer consciousness and life, in the vital and physical planes on their own essential lines. It is that which, without your mind understanding it or how it is to be done, you are asking for, and I too; only I see the necessity of a vital transformation, while you seem to think and to demand that it should be done without any radical transformation, leaving the vital as it is. In the beginning, before I discovered the secret of the Supermind, I myself tried to seek the reconciliation through an association of the spiritual consciousness with the vital, but my experience and all experience show that this leads to nothing definite and final, —it ends where it began, midway between the two poles of human nature. An association is not enough, a transformation is indispensable.

The tradition of later Vaishnava Bhakti is an attempt to sublimate the vital impulses through love by turning human love towards the Divine. It made a strong and intense effort and had many

rich and beautiful experiences; but its weakness was just there, that it remained valid only as an inner experience turned towards the Inner Divine, but it stopped at that point. Chaitanya's *prema* was nothing but a psychic divine love with a strong sublimated vital manifestation. But the moment Vaishnavism before or after him made an attempt at greater externalisation, we know what happened—a vitalistic deterioration, much corruption and decline. You cannot appeal to Chaitanya's example as against psychic or divine love; his was not something merely vital-human; in its essence, though not in its form, it was very much the first step in the transformation, which we ask of the sadhaks, to make their love psychic and use the vital not for its own sake, but as an expression of the soul's realisation. It is the first step and perhaps for some it may be sufficient, for we are not asking everybody to become supramental; but for any full manifestation on the physical plane the supramental is indispensable.

In the later Vaishnava tradition the sadhana takes the form of an application of human vital love in all its principal turns to the Divine; *viraha*, *abhiman*, even complete separation (like the departure of Krishna to Mathura) are made prominent elements of this Yoga. But all that was only meant—

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in the sadhana itself, not in the Vaishnava poems—as a passage of which the end is *milan* or complete union; but the stress laid on the untoward elements by some would almost seem to make strife, separation, *abhimān*, the whole means, if not the very object of this kind of *prema-yoga*. Again, this method was only applied to the inner, not to a physically embodied Divine and had a reference to certain states and reactions of the inner consciousness in its seeking after the Divine. In the relations with the embodied Divine Manifestation, or, I may add, of the disciple with the Guru, such things might rise as a result of human imperfection, but they were not made part of the theory of the relations. I do not think they formed a regular and authorised part of the relations of the bhaktas to the Guru. On the contrary, the relation of the disciple to the Guru in the Guruvada is supposed always to be that of worship, respect, a complete happy confidence, an unquestioning acceptance of the guidance. The application of the unchanged vital relations to the embodied Divine may lead and has led to movements which are not conducive to the progress of the Yoga.

Ramakrishna's Yoga was also turned only to an inner realisation of the inner Divine,—nothing less, but also nothing more. I believe Ramakrishna's

sentence about the claim of the sadhak on the Divine for whom he has sacrificed everything was the assertion of an inner and not an outer claim, on the inner rather than on any physically embodied Divine: it was a claim for the full spiritual union, the God-lover seeking the Divine, but the Divine also giving himself and meeting the God-lover. There can be no objection to that; such a claim all seekers of the Divine have; but as to the modalities of this divine meeting, it does not carry us much farther. In any case, my object is a realisation on the physical plane and I cannot consent merely to repeat Ramakrishna. I seem to remember too that for a long time he was withdrawn into himself, all his life was not spent with his disciples. He got his siddhi first in retirement and when he came out and received everyone, well, a few years of it wore out his body. To that, I suppose, he had no objection; for he even pronounced a theory, when Keshav Chandra was dying, that spiritual experience ought to wear out the body. But at the same time, when asked why he got illness in the throat, he answered that it was the sins of his disciples which they threw upon him and he had to swallow. Not being satisfied, as he was, with an inner liberation alone, I cannot accept these ideas or these results, for that does not sound to me

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like a successful meeting of the Divine and the sadhak on the physical plane, however successful it might have been for the inner life. Krishna did great things and was very clearly a manifestation of the Divine. But I remember a passage of the Mahabharat in which he complains of the unquiet life his followers and adorers gave him, their constant demands, reproaches, their throwing of their unregenerate vital nature upon him. And in the Gita he speaks of this human world as a transient and sorrowful affair and, in spite of his gospel of divine action, seems almost to admit that to leave it is after all the best solution. The traditions of the past are very great in their own place, in the past, but I do not see why we should merely repeat them and not go farther. In the spiritual development of the consciousness upon earth the great past ought to be followed by a greater future.

There is the rule that you seem all to ignore entirely—the difficulties of the physical embodiment and the divine realisation on the physical plane. For most it seems to be a simple alternative, either the Divine comes down in full power and the thing is done, no difficulty, no necessary conditions, no law or process, only miracle and magic, or else, well, this cannot be the Divine. Again you all (or almost

all) insist on the Divine becoming human, remaining in the human consciousness and you protest against any attempt to make the human Divine. On the other hand, there is an outcry of disappointment, bewilderment, distrust, perhaps indignation if there are human difficulties, if there is strain in the body, a swaying struggle with adverse forces, obstacles, checks, illness and some begin to say, "Oh, there is nothing Divine here!"—as if one could remain vitally and physically in the untransformed individual human consciousness, in unchanged contact with it, satisfy its demands, and yet be immune under all circumstances and in all conditions against strain and struggle and illness. If I want to divinise the human consciousness, to bring down the supramental, the Truth-Consciousness, the Light, the Force into the physical to transform it, to create there a great fullness of Truth and Light and Power and Bliss and Love, the response is repulsion or fear or unwillingness—or a doubt whether it is possible. On one side there is the claim that illness and the rest should be impossible, on the other a violent rejection of the only condition under which these things can become impossible. I know that this is the natural inconsistency of the human vital mind wanting two inconsistent and incompatible things together; but that is one reason why it is necessary

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to transform the human and put something a little more luminous in its place.

But is the Divine then something so terrible, horrible or repellant that the idea of its entry into the physical, its divinising of the human should create this shrinking, refusal, revolt or fear? I can understand that the unregenerate vital attached to its own petty sufferings and pleasures, to the brief ignorant drama of life, should shrink from what will change it. But why should a God-lover, a God-seeker, a sadhak fear the divinisation of the consciousness? Why should he object to become one in nature with what he seeks, why should he recoil from *sadrishya-mukti*? Behind this fear there are usually two causes: first, there is the feeling of the vital that it will have to cease to be obscure, crude, muddy, egoistic, unrefined (spiritually), full of stimulating desires and small pleasures and interesting sufferings (for it shrinks even from the Ananda which will replace this); next there is some vague ignorant idea of the mind, due, I suppose, to the ascetic tradition, that the divine nature is something cold, bare, empty, austere, aloof, without the glorious riches of the egoistic human vital life. As if there were not a divine vital and as if that divine vital is not itself and, when it gets the means to manifest, will not make the life on earth also infinitely more full of

beauty, love, radiance, warmth, fire, intensity and divine passion and capacity for bliss than the present impotent, suffering, pettily and transiently excited and soon tired vitality of the still so imperfect human creation.

But you will say that it is not the Divine from which you recoil, rather you accept and ask for it (provided that it is not too divine), but what you object to is the supramental—grand, aloof, incomprehensible, unapproachable, a sort of austere Nirakar Brahman. The supramental so described is a bogey created by this part of your vital mind in order to frighten itself and justify its attitude. Behind this strange description there seems to be an idea that the supramental is a new version of the Vedantic featureless and incommunicable Parabrahman, vast, grand, cold, empty, remote, devastating, overwhelming; it is not quite that, of course, since it can come down, but for all practical purposes it is just as bad! It is curious that you admit your ignorance of what the supramental can be, and yet you in these moods not only pronounce categorically what it is like, but reject emphatically my experience about it as of no practical validity or not valid for anybody but myself! I have not insisted, I have answered only casually because I am not asking you now to be non-human and divine;

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much less to be supramental; but as you are always returning to this point when you have these attacks and making it the pivot—or at least a main support—of your depression, I am obliged to answer. The Supramental is *not* grand, aloof, cold and austere; it is not something opposed to or inconsistent with a full vital and physical manifestation; on the contrary, it carries in it the only possibility of the full fullness of the vital force and the physical life on earth. It is because it is so, because it was so revealed to me and for no other reason that I have followed after it and persevered till I came into contact with it and was able to draw down some power of it and its influence. I am concerned with the earth, not with worlds beyond for their own sake; it is a terrestrial realisation that I seek and not a flight to distant summits. All other Yogas regard this life as an illusion or a passing phase; the supramental Yoga alone regards it as a thing created by the Divine for a progressive manifestation and takes the fulfilment of the life and the body for its object. The supramental is simply the Truth-Consciousness and what it brings in its descent is the full truth of life, the full truth of consciousness in Matter. One has indeed to rise to high summits to reach it, but the more one rises, the more one can bring down below. No doubt, life and body have not to remain the

ignorant, imperfect, impotent things they are now; but why should a change to fuller life-power, fuller body-power be considered something aloof, cold and undesirable? The utmost Ananda the body and life are now capable of is a brief excitement of the vital mind or the nerves or the cells which is limited, imperfect and soon passes: with the supramental change all the cells, nerves, vital forces, embodied mental forces can become filled with a thousandfold Ananda, capable of an intensity of bliss which passes description and which need not fade away. How aloof, repellent and undesirable! The supramental love means an intense unity of soul with soul, mind with mind, life with life, and an entire flooding of the body consciousness with the physical experience of oneness, the presence of the Beloved in every part, in every cell of the body. Is that too something aloof and grand but undesirable? With the supramental change, the very thing on which you insist, the possibility of the free physical meeting of the embodied Divine with the sadhak without conflict of forces and without undesirable reactions becomes possible, assured and free. That too is, I suppose, something aloof and undesirable? I could go on—for pages, but this is enough for the moment.

14-1-1932

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Necessity of Transformation

YES, unless the external nature is transformed, one may go as high as possible and have the largest experiences—but the external mind remains an instrument of Ignorance.

November, 1933

Change of Character and Yoga Experiences

THE automatic tendency is a good sign as it shows that it is the inner being opening to the Truth which is pressing forward the necessary changes.

As you say, it is the failure of the right attitude that comes in the way of passing through ordeals to a change of nature. The pressure is becoming greater now for this change of character even more than for decisive Yoga experiences—for if the experience comes, it fails to be decisive because of the want of the requisite change of nature. The mind, for instance, gets the experience of One in all, but the vital cannot follow, because it is dominated by ego-reaction and ego-motive or the habits of the outer nature keep up a way of thinking, feeling, acting, living which

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is quite out of harmony with the experience, or the psychic and part of the mind and emotional being feel frequently the closeness of the Mother, but the rest of the nature is unoffered and goes its own way prolonging division from her nearness, creating distance. It is not enough, and there is great need that this should change.

9-9-1936

Purification of Heart and Psychic Change— Value of Occult Powers

THERE is no impossibility in the purification of the heart which was the thing you were trying for, and when the heart is purified, other things which seemed impossible before become easy—even the inner surrender which now seems to you impracticable.

It is the usual experience that if the humility and resignation are firmly founded in the heart, other things like trust come naturally afterwards. If once the psychic light and happiness which is the boon of these things is founded, it is not easy for other forces to cloud that state and not possible for

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them to destroy it. That is the common experience.

Purification and consecration are two great necessities of sadhana. Those who have experiences before purification run a great risk: it is much better to have the heart pure first, for then the way becomes safe. That is why I advocate the psychic change of the nature first—for that means the purification of the heart: the turning of it wholly to the Divine, the subjection of the mind and the vital to the control of the inner being, the soul. Always, when the soul is in front, one gets the right guidance from within as to what is to be done, what avoided, what is the wrong thing or the true thing in thought, feeling, action. But this inner intimation emerges in proportion as the consciousness grows more and more pure.

The stumbling block of X was ambition, pride, vanity—the desire to be a big Yogi with occult powers. To try to bring down occult powers into an unpurified mind, heart and body—well, you can do it if you want to dance on the edge of a precipice. Or you can do it if your aim is not to be spiritual but to be an occultist, for then you can follow the necessary methods and get the help of the occult powers. On the other hand, the true occult spiritual forces and mysteries can be called down or can come down without calling, but this must be made secondary to

the one true thing, the seeking for the Divine, and if it is part of the Divine plan in you. Occult powers can only be for the spiritual man an instrumentation of the Divine Power that uses him: they cannot be the aim or an aim of his sadhana. Many people have a habit of doing Yoga according to their own ideas without caring for the guidance of the Guru—from whom, however, they expect an entire protection and success in sadhana even if they prance or gambol into the wrongest paths possible.

What I mean by subtle methods is psychological, non-mechanical processes, e.g., concentration in the heart, surrender, self-purification, working out by inner means the change of the consciousness. This does not mean that there is no outer change: the outer change is necessary but as a part of the inner change. If there is impurity or insincerity within, the outer change will not be effective, but if there is a sincere inner working, the outer change will help it and accelerate the process. . . . The most important thing for the purification of the heart is an absolute sincerity. No pretence with oneself, no concealment from the Divine, or oneself, or the Guru, a straight look at one's movements, a straight will to make them straight. It does not so much matter if it takes time: one must be prepared to make it one's whole life-task to seek the Divine. Purifying the heart

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means after all a pretty considerable achievement and it is no use getting despondent, despairful, etc., because one finds things in oneself that still need to be changed. If one keeps the true will and true attitude, then the intuitions or intimations from within will begin to grow, become clear, precise, unmistakable and the strength to follow them will grow also: and then before even you are satisfied with yourself, the Divine will be satisfied with you and begin to withdraw the veil by which he protects himself and his seekers against a premature and perilous grasping of the greatest thing to which humanity can aspire.

March, 1936

Intermediate Experiences and Spiritual Realisation

BUT why be overwhelmed by any wealth of any kind of experiences? What does it amount to, after all? The quality of a sadhak does not depend on that; one great spiritual realisation direct and at the centre will often make a great sadhak or Yogi, an army of intermediate Yogic experiences will not, that has been amply proved by a host of instances.... You

need not therefore compare that wealth to your poverty. To open yourself to the descent of the higher consciousness (the true being) is the one thing needed and that, even if that comes after long effort and many failures, is better than a hectic gallop leading nowhere.

Preparation for Establishment of Yoga Consciousness

I DON'T think there is any cause for dissatisfaction with the progress made by you. Experiences come to many before the nature is ready to make full profit from them; to others a more or less prolonged period of purification and preparation of the stuff of the nature or the instruments comes first, while experiences are held up till this process is largely or wholly over. The latter method which seems to be adopted in your case is the safer and sounder of the two. In this respect we think it is evident that you have made considerable progress, for instance, in control over the violence and impatience and heat natural to the volcanic energy of your temperament, in sincerity also in curbing the devious and errant impulses of an enormously active mind and temperament, in a greater quiet and harmony in the being

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as a whole. No doubt, the process has to be completed, but something very fundamental seems to have been done. It is more important to look at the thing from the positive rather than the negative side. The things that have to be established are—*brahmacharyam shamah satyam prashantir atmasamyama*: *brahmacharya*, complete sex-purity; *shamah*, quiet and harmony in the being, its forces maintained but controlled, harmonised, disciplined; *satyam*, truth and sincerity in the whole nature; *prashantih*, a general state of peace and calm; *atmasamyama*, the power and habit to control whatever needs control in the movements of the nature. When these are fairly established, one has laid the foundation on which one can develop the Yoga consciousness and with the Yoga consciousness there comes an easy opening to realisation and experience.

30-11-1936

Purification and Experience

I do not know what K said or in which article, I do not have it with me. But if the statement is that nobody can have a successful meditation

or realise anything till he is pure and perfect, I fail to follow it: it contradicts my own experience. I have always had realisation by meditation first and the purification started afterwards as a result. I have seen many get important, even fundamental realisations by meditation who could not be said to have a great inner development. Are all Yogis who have meditated with effect and had great realisations in their inner consciousness perfect in their nature? It does not look like it to me. I am unable to believe in absolute generalisations in this field, because the development of spiritual consciousness is an exceedingly vast and complex affair in which all sorts of things can happen and one might almost say that for each man it is different according to his nature and that the one thing that is essential is the inner call and aspiration and the perseverance to follow always after it, no matter how long it takes, what are the difficulties or impediments, because nothing else will satisfy the soul within us.

It is quite true that a certain amount of purification is indispensable for going on, that the more complete the purification the better, because then when the realisations begin they can continue without big difficulties or relapses and without any possibility of fall or failures. It is also true that

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with many purification is the first need,—certain things have to be got out of the way before one can begin any consecutive inner experience. But the main need is a certain preparation of the consciousness so that it may be able to respond more and more freely to the higher Force. In this preparation many things are useful—the poetry and music you are doing can help, for it all acts as a sort of *shravana* and *manana*, even, if the feeling roused is intense, a sort of natural *nididhyasana*. Psychic preparation, clearing out of the grosser forms of mental and vital ego, opening mind and heart to the Guru and many other things help greatly—it is not perfection or a complete freedom from the dualities or ego that is the indispensable preliminary, but preparedness, a fitness of the inner being which makes spiritual responses and receiving possible.

There is no reason therefore to take as gospel truth these demands which may have been right for K on the way he has trod, but cannot be imposed on all: the law of the spirit is not so exacting and inexorable.

Difficulties of Yoga

YOGA has always its difficulties, whatever Yoga it be. Moreover, it acts in a different way on different seekers. Some have to overcome the difficulties of their nature first before they get any experiences to speak of, others get a splendid beginning and all the difficulties afterwards, others go on for a long time having alternate risings to the top of the wave and then a descent into the gulfs and so on till the difficulty is worked out, others have a smooth path which does not mean that they have no difficulties—they have plenty, but they do not care a straw for them, because they feel that the Divine will help them to the goal or that he is with them even when they do not feel him—their faith makes them imperturbable.

26-8-1936

Bright and Dark Periods in Sadhana—Surrender

THE up and down movement which you speak of is common to all ways of Yoga. It is there in the path of Bhakti, but there are equally alternations

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of states of light and states of darkness, sometimes sheer and prolonged darkness, when one follows the path of knowledge. Those who have occult experiences come to periods when all experiences cease and even seem finished for ever. Even when there have been many and permanent realisations, these seem to go behind the veil and leave nothing in front except a dull blank, filled, if at all, only with recurrent attacks and difficulties. These alterations are the result of the nature of human consciousness and are not a proof of unfitness or of predestined failure. One has to be prepared for them and pass through. They are the "day and night" of the Vedic mystics.

As for surrender, everyone has his own first way of approach towards it; but if it is due to fear, "form" or sense of duty, then certainly that is not surrender at all; these things have nothing to do with surrender. Also, complete and total surrender is not so easy as some seem to imagine. There are always many and large reservations; even if one is not conscious of them, they are there. Complete surrender can best come by a complete love and bhakti. Bhakti, on the other hand, can begin without surrender, but it naturally leads, as it forms itself, to surrender.

You are surely mistaken in thinking that the

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difficulty of giving up intellectual convictions is a special stumbling-block in you more than in others. The attachment to one's own ideas and convictions, the insistence on them is a common characteristic. It can be removed by a light of knowledge from above which gives one the direct touch of Truth or the luminous experience of it and takes away all value from mere intellectual opinion, ideas or conviction and removes the necessity for it, or by a right consciousness which brings with it right ideas, right feeling, right action and right everything else. Or else it must come by a spiritual and mental humility which is rare in human nature—especially the mental, for the mind is always apt to think its own ideas, true or false, are the right ideas. Eventually, it is the psychic growth that makes this surrender too possible and that again comes most easily by bhakti. In any case, the existence of this difficulty is not in itself a good cause for forecasting failure in Yoga.

21-10-1942

NECESSITY OF TRANSFORMATION

Thoroughness and Persistence

WHAT I want of you besides aspiring for faith? Well, just a little thoroughness and persistence in the method! Don't aspire for two days and then go into the dumps, evolving a gospel of earthquake and Schopenhauer plus the ass and all the rest of it. Give the Divine a full sporting chance. When he lights something in you or is preparing a light, don't come in with a wet blanket of despondency and throw it on the poor flame. You will say, "It is a mere candle that is lit—nothing at all!" But in these matters, when the darkness of human mind and life and body has to be dissipated, a candle is always a beginning—a lamp can follow and afterwards a sun; but the beginning must be allowed to have a sequel and not get cut off from its natural sequelæ by chunks of sadness and doubt and despair. At the beginning, and for a long time, the experiences do usually come in little quanta with empty spaces between—but, if allowed its way, the spaces will diminish and the quantum theory give way to the Newtonian continuity of the spirit. But you have never yet given it a real chance. The empty spaces have been peopled with doubts and denials and so the quanta have become rare, the beginning remains a beginning. Other difficulties

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you have faced and rejected, but this difficulty you have dandled too much for a long time and it has become strong—it must be dealt with by a persevering effort. I do not say that all doubts must disappear before anything comes—that would be to make sadhana impossible, for doubt is the mind's persistent assailant. All I say is, don't allow the assailant to become a companion, don't give him the open door and the fireside seat. Above all, don't drive away the incoming Divine with that dispiriting wet blanket of sadness and despair!

To put it more soberly—accept once and for all that this thing has to be done, that it is the only thing left for yourself or the earth. Outside are earthquakes and Hitlers and a collapsing civilisation and, generally speaking, the ass and the flood. All the more reason to tend towards the one thing to be done, the thing you have been sent to aid in getting done. It is difficult and the way long and the encouragement given meagre? What then? Why should you expect so great a thing to be easy or that there must be either a swift success or none? The difficulties have to be faced and the more cheerfully they are faced, the sooner they will be overcome. The one thing to do is to keep the mantra of success, the determination of victory, the fixed resolve, "Have it I must and have it I will." Impossible? There is

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no such thing as impossibility—there are difficulties and things of *longue haleine*, but no impossibles. What one is determined fixedly to do will get done now or later—it becomes possible. Drive out dark despair and go bravely on with your Yoga. As the darkness disappears, the inner doors will open.

27-1-1934

Need of Patience

A YOGA like this needs patience, because it means a change both of the radical motives and of each part and detail of the nature. It will not do to say —“Yesterday I determined to give myself entirely to the Mother, and look it is not done, on the contrary, all the old opposite things turn up once more.” Of course, when you come to the point where you make a resolution of that kind, immediately all that stands in the way does rise up—it invariably happens. The thing to be done is to stand back, observe and reject, not to allow these things to get hold of you, to keep your central will separate from them and call in the Mother’s Force to meet them. If one does get involved, as often happens, then to get

disinvolved as soon as possible and go forward again. That is what everybody, every Yoga does—to be depressed because one cannot do everything in a rush is quite contrary to the truth of the matter.

The steadiness you have gained is not a personal virtue but depends on your keeping the contact with the Mother—for it is her Force that is behind it and behind all the progress you can make. Learn to rely on that Force, to open to it more completely and to seek spiritual progress even not for your own sake but for the sake of the Divine—then you will go more smoothly.

Duality in Human Nature

YES, the solution is certainly the Divine Grace—it comes of itself intervening suddenly or with an increasing force when all is ready. Meanwhile, it is there behind all the struggles, and “the unconquerable aspiration for the light” of which you speak is the outward sign that it will intervene. As for the two natures, it is only one form of the perpetual duality in human nature from which nobody escapes, so universal that many systems recognize it as a standing feature to be taken account of in their discipline,

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two Personæ, one bright, one dark in every human being. If that were not there, Yoga would be an easy walk-over and there would be no struggle. But its presence is not any reason for thinking that there is unfitness; the obstinacy of the worldly element is also not a reason, for it is always obstinate in its very nature. It is like the Germans in their trenches, falling back and digging themselves in for a new mass attack, every time they are baffled. But for all that, if the bright Person is equally determined not to be satisfied without the crown of light, if it is strong enough to make the being unable to rest content in lesser things, then that is the sign that the being is called, one of the elect in spite of outward appearances and its own doubts and despairs—who has them not, not even a Christ or a Buddha is without them—and that the inner spirit will surely win in the end. There is no cause for any apprehension on that score.

31-10-1933

∴ Danger in Yoga and Safeguards

I HAVE never said that Yoga or that this Yoga is a safe and easy path. What I say is that anyone who

has the will to go through, can go through. For the rest, if you aim high there is always the danger of a steep fall if you misconduct your aeroplane. But the danger is for those who allow themselves to entertain a double being, aiming high but also indulging their lower outlook and hankerings. What else can you expect when people do that? You must become single-minded, then the difficulties of the mind and vital will be overcome. Otherwise, those who oscillate between their heights and their abysses will always be in danger till they have become single-minded. That applies to the "advanced" as well as to the beginner. These are facts of nature; I can't pretend for anybody's comfort that they are otherwise. But there is the fact also that nobody need keep himself in this danger. One-mindedness, surrender to the Divine, faith, true love for the Divine, complete sincerity in the will, spiritual humility (real, not formal)—there are so many things that can be a safeguard against any chance of eventual downfall. Slips, stumbles, difficulties, upsets everyone has; one can't be assured against these things, but if one has the safeguards, they are transitory, help the nature to learn and are followed by a better progress.

6-1-1934

NECESSITY OF TRANSFORMATION

Blows in Life and Yoga

As for the blows, well, are they always given by the Yoga? Is it not sometimes the sadhak of the Yoga who gives blows to himself? There are plenty of blows in ordinary life according to my experience. Blows are the order of existence: our own nature and the nature of things bring them upon us until we learn to present to them a back which they cannot touch.

Storms on the Path

I QUITE agree with you in not relishing the idea of another attack of this nature. I am myself, I suppose, more a hero by necessity than by choice—I do not love storms and battles, at least on the subtle plane. The sunlit way may be an illusion,—though I do not think it is,—for I have seen people treading it for years; but a way with only natural or even only moderate fits of rough weather, a way without typhoons surely is possible—there are so many examples; *durgam pathastat* may be generally true and certainly the path of Laya or Nirvana is difficult in the extreme to most (although in my case I walked

into Nirvana without intending it or rather Nirvana walked casually into me not so far from the beginning of my yogic career without asking my leave). But the path need not be cut by periodical violent storms, though that it is so for a great many is an obvious fact. But even for these if they stick to it, I find that after a certain point the storms diminish in force, frequency, duration. That is why I insisted so much on your sticking—for if you stick, the turning-point is bound to come. I have seen some astonishing instances recently of this typhoonic periodicity beginning to fade out after years and years of violent recurrence.

These things are not part of the normal difficulties, however acute, of the nature but special formations—tornadoes which start (usually from a particular point, sometimes varying) and go whirling round in the same circle always till it is finished. . . . To dissolve it ought to be possible if one sees it for what it is and is resolved to get rid of it—never allowing any mental justification of it, however logical, right and plausible the justification may seem to be—always replying to all the mind's arguments or the vital's feelings in favour of it, like Cato to the debaters, "Delenda est Carthago"—"Carthage has to be destroyed", Carthage in this case being the formation and its nefarious circle.

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Anyway the closing idea in your letter is the right one. "The Divine is worth ferretting out even if oceans of gloom have to be crossed." If you could confront the formation always with that firm resolution, it should bring victory.

22-1-1937

THE Divine may be difficult, but his difficulties can be overcome if one keeps at him.

11-2-1937

Right Attitude in Victory and Crisis

THERE is no reason to think that the movement of strength and purity was a make-believe. No, it was a real thing. But with these strong forward movements the vital enthusiasm often comes in with a triumphant "Now it is finished" which is not quite justified, for, "Now it will be soon finished" would be nearer to it. It is at these moments that the thrice-damned Censor comes in with a jog, raises up a still shaky bit of the nature and produces a result that is out of all proportion to the size of

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the little bit, just to show that it is not finished. I have had any number of times that experience myself. All this comes from the complexity and slowness of our evolutionary nature which Yoga quickens but not as a whole at a stroke. But in fact, as. said, these crises are out of all proportion to their cause in the nature. One must therefore not be discouraged, but see the exaggeration in the adversary's successful negation as well as the exaggeration in our idea of a complete and definite victory already there.

24-6-1936

Gain after Crisis

AFTER each crisis there is something gained, if there has been a victory and rejection. The gain is to externalise the vital disturbance, so that even if it returns it will be felt so much an outside force that the observing consciousness (mental, higher vital) cannot be disturbed. If you keep that, it will be an immense advance.

23-10-1933

II. THE TRUE WAY OUT OF DIFFICULTIES

Removal of Difficulties

HE can continue his endeavour and let us know if there is any result. The difficulties that have risen in him are quite normal and natural reaction to the effort he is making. It is usual for these resistances to rise up, for they have to manifest themselves in order that they may be dealt with and thrown out. If he perseveres, that should happen sooner or later. But it is best not to struggle with the resistances but to stand back from them, observe as a witness, reject these movements and call on the Divine Power to remove them. Surrender of the nature is not an easy thing and may take a long time; surrender of the self, if one can do it, is easier and once that is done, that of the nature will come about sooner or later. For that it is necessary to detach oneself from the action of the Prakriti and see oneself as separate. To observe the movements as a witness without being discouraged or disturbed is the best way to effect the necessary detachment and separation. This also would help to increase the receptivity to any aid that may be given to him and to bring about the reliance.

13-5-1945

Mental Self-Analysis and Inner Self-Vision

WHAT the Mother spoke of was not self-analysis nor dissection; they are mental things which can deal with the inanimate or make the live dead—they are not spiritual methods. What the Mother spoke of was not analysis, but a seeing of oneself and of all the living movements of the being and the nature, a vivid observation of the personalities and forces that move on the stage of our being, their motives, their impulses, their potentialities, an observation quite as interesting as the seeing and understanding of a drama or a novel, a living vision and perception of how things are done in us, which brings also a living mastery over this inner universe. Such things become dry only when one deals with them with the analytic and ratiocinative mind, not when one deals with them thus seeingly and intuitively as a movement of life. If you had that observation (from the inner spiritual, not the outer intellectual and ethical viewpoint), then it would be comparatively easy for you to get out of your difficulties; for instance, you would find at once where this irrational impulse to flee away came from and it would not have any hold upon you. Of course, all that can be done to the best effect when you

THE TRUE WAY OUT OF DIFFICULTIES

stand back from the play of your nature and become the Witness-Control or the Spectator-Actor-Manager. But that is what happens when you take this kind of self-seeing posture.

The fear that this will be dry or painful is an idea of the non-understanding intellect.

True Self-Vision

You stick to your intellectual-ethical version of the inner self-vision? Dry? policeman? criminal? Great Lord! If it were that, it would cease to be self-vision at all—for in the true self-vision there is no policemen and no criminaldom at all. All that belongs to the intellectual-ethical virtue-and-sin dodge which is only a mental construction of practical value for the outward life but not a truth of real inner values. In the true self-vision we see only harmonies and disharmonies and set the wrong notes right and replace them by the true notes. But I say that for the sake of truth, not to persuade you to start the self-vision effort; for if you did with these ideas of it, you would inevitably start it on the policeman basis and get into trouble. Besides, evidently, you prefer in the

Yoga to be the piano and not the pianist, which is all right but involves total self-giving and the intervention of the supreme musician and harmonist. May it be so.

Every man is full of these contradictions because he is one person, no doubt, but made up of different personalities; the perception of multiple personality is becoming well-known to psychologists now who very commonly disagree with each other. So long as one does not aim at unity in a single dominant intention, like that of seeking and self-dedication to the Divine, they get on somehow together, alternating or quarrelling or muddling through or else one taking the lead and compelling the others to take a minor part—but once you try to unite them in one aim, then the trouble becomes evident.

22-1-1936

True Way Out of Difficulty

DIFFICULTY cannot be overcome by your running away from it.

All this comes from your having taken a wrong way with yourself. It is not by tormenting yourself

THE TRUE WAY OUT OF DIFFICULTIES

with remorse and harassing thoughts that you can overcome. It is by looking straight at yourself, very quietly, with a quiet and firm resolution and then going on cheerfully and bravely in full confidence and reliance, trusting in the Grace, serenely and vigilantly, anchoring yourself on your psychic being, calling down more and more of the love and Ananda, turning more and more exclusively to the Mother. That is the true way—and there is no other.

20-5-1933

Faith in Difficulty

A WEEPING that comes with the feeling you speak of is the sign of a psychic sorrow—for it translates an aspiration of the psychic being. But depression and hopelessness ought not to come. You should rather cling to the faith that since there is a true aspiration in you, it is sure to be fulfilled, whatever the difficulties of the external nature. You must recover in that faith the inner peace and quietude while at the same time keeping the clear insight into

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what has to be done and the steady aspiration for the inner and outer change.

12-3-1935

Breaking the Recurring Obstacle

WHAT stands in the way is the recurring circle of the old mixture. To break out of that is very necessary to arrive at an inner yogic calm and peace not disturbed by these things. If that is established, it will be possible to feel in it the Mother's presence, to open to her guidance, to get, not by occasional glimpses but in a steady opening and flowering, the psychic perception and the descent of the spiritual Light and Ananda. For that help will be with you.

7-3-1937

The Mother's Help .

HE must go into himself and find the presence of the Divine Mother within and the psychic behind the

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heart and from there the knowledge will come and also the power to dissolve the inner obstacles.

21-12-1936

Two Elements of Spiritual Success

Our help will be there. It can be effective in spite of your physical mind, but it will be more effective if the steady working will is there as its instrument. There are always two elements in spiritual success—one's own steady will and endeavour and the Power that in one way or another helps and gives the result of endeavour.

26-1-1934

The Inner Guidance

As for the feeling from within, it depends on being able to go inside. Sometimes it comes of itself with the deepening of the consciousness by bhakti or otherwise, sometimes it comes by practice—a sort of

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referring the matter and listening for the answer—listening is, of course, a metaphor but it is difficult to express it otherwise—it doesn't mean that the answer comes necessarily in the shape of words, spoken or unspoken, though it does sometimes or for some; it can take any shape. The main difficulty for many is to be sure of the right answer. For that it is necessary to be able to contact the consciousness of the Guru inwardly—that comes best by bhakti. Otherwise, the attempt to get the feeling from within by practice may become a delicate and ticklish job. Obstacles: (1) normal habit of relying on outward means for everything; (2) ego, substituting its suggestions for the right answer; (3) mental activity; (4) intruder nuisances. I think you need not be eager for this, but rely on the growth of the inner consciousness. The above is only by way of general explanation.

28-4-1943

Consciousness for True Actions

IF you want the consciousness for true actions very much and aspire for it, it may come in one of

THE TRUE WAY OUT OF DIFFICULTIES

several ways:—

1. You may get the habit or faculty of watching your movements in such a way that you see the impulse to action coming and can see too its nature.

2. A consciousness may come which feels uneasy whenever a wrong thought or impulse to action or feeling is there.

3. Something within you may warn and stop you when you are going to do the wrong action.

7-2-1933

The Inner Conquest

THAT is the inconvenience of going away from a difficulty,—it runs after one,—or rather one carries it with oneself, for the difficulty is truly inside, not outside. Outside circumstances only give it the occasion to manifest itself and so long as the inner difficulty is not conquered, the circumstances will always crop up one way or another.

4-5-1937

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Need of Vigilance

As for your inner attitude, it must remain the same. Not to be excited or drawn outwards by these "incidents" of the outward life or by the coming in of new elements is the rule; they must come in like waves into an untroubled sea and mix in it and become themselves untroubled and serene.

Your present condition is all that it should be,—only you must remain vigilant always. For when the condition is good, the lower movements have a habit of subsiding and become quiescent, hiding as it were,—or they go out of the nature and remain at a distance. But if they see that the sadhak is losing his vigilance, then they slowly begin to rise or draw near, most often unseen, and when he is quite off his guard, surge up suddenly or make a sudden irruption. This continues until the whole nature, mental, vital, physical down to the very subconscious is enlightened, conscious, full of the Divine. Till that happens, one must always remain watchful in a sleepless vigilance.

26-5-1932

THE TRUE WAY OUT OF DIFFICULTIES

Difficulties of Character

THE difficulties of the character persist so long as one yields to them in action when they rise. One has to make a strict rule not to act according to the impulses of anger, ego or whatever the weakness may be that one wants to get rid of, or if one does act in the heat of the moment, not to justify or persist in the action. If one does that, after a time the difficulty abates or is confined purely to a subjective movement which one can observe, detach oneself from and combat.

6-3-1938

Fall in Yoga

Z's fall after his one year's rapid progress had obvious reasons in *his* character which do not exist in others. It is well-known to all Yogis that a fall is possible and the Gita speaks of it more than once. But how does the fall prove that spiritual experience is not true and genuine? The fall of a man from a great height does not prove that he never reached a great height.

III. TRANSFORMATION OF THE VITAL NATURE

The Nature of the Vital

YES, that is the nature of the vital. It can make the absolute and enthusiastic surrender as well as cause all trouble possible. Without the vital there is no life-force of creation or manifestation; it is a necessary instrument of the spirit for life.

2-10-1933

Purification and Mastery of Vital Nature

I HAVE always said that the vital is indispensable for the divine or spiritual action—without it there can be no complete expression, no realisation in life—hardly even any realisation in sadhana. When I speak of the vital mixture or of the obstructions, revolts, etc. of the vital, it is the unregenerated outer vital full of desire and ego and the lower passions of which I speak. I could say the same against the mind and the physical when they obstruct or oppose, but precisely because the vital is so powerful and

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indispensable, its obstruction, opposition or refusal of co-operation is most strikingly effective and its wrong mixtures are more dangerous to the sadhana. That is why I have always insisted on the dangers of the unregenerated vital and the necessity of mastery and purification there. It is not because I hold, like the Sannyasis, the vital and its life-power to be a thing to be condemned and rejected in its very nature.

Affection, love, tenderness are in their nature psychic,—the vital has them because the psychic is trying to express itself through the vital. It is through the emotional being that the psychic most easily expresses, for it stands just behind it in the heart centre. But it wants these things to be pure. Not that it rejects the outward expression through the vital and the physical, but as the psychic being is the form of the soul, it naturally feels the attraction of soul to soul, the union of soul with soul as the things that are to it most abiding and concrete. Mind, vital, body are means of expression and very precious means of expression, but the inner life is for the soul the first thing, the deepest reality, and these have to be subordinated to it and conditioned by it,—its expression, its instruments and channel. I do not think that in my emphasis on the inner things, on the psychic and spiritual, I am saying anything new, strange or unintelligible. These things have

always been stressed from the beginning and the more the human being is evolved, the more they take on importance. I do not see how Yoga can be possible without this premier stress on the inner life, on the soul and the spirit. The emphasis on the mastery of the vital, its subordination and subjection to the spiritual and the psychic is also nothing new, strange or exorbitant. It has been insisted on always for any kind of spiritual life; even the Yogas which seek most to use the vital, like certain forms of Vaishnavism, yet insist on the purification and the total offering of it to the Divine. All realisation of the Divine is an inner realisation, only, here the soul offers itself through the emotional being. The soul or psychic being is not something unheard of or incomprehensible.

20-9-1933

Vital Demand and Bargain in Yoga

EVIDENTLY, the condition into which you have fallen is due to an upsurging of suppressed elements in the lower vital nature. It has been compelled by the mind and the higher vital part in you to give up the little "joys and pleasures" to which it was habituated,

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but it—or at any rate the subconscient part of it which is often the most powerful—did that without entire conviction and probably with “reservations” and “safeguards” and in exchange for a promise of compensations, other and greater joys and pleasures to replace all it was losing. This is evident from what you write; your description of the nature of the depression, the return of what you call impure thoughts which are merely indices of the subconscient lower vital desire-complex, the doubt thrown upon the generosity of the Divine, the demand for compensation for losses, something like striking a bargain with the Divine, a *quid pro quo* pact, are all unmistakable. Latterly, there has been a combination of circumstances which have rather suddenly increased the deprivation of its former outlets; this attack is its way of non-co-operation or protest. There is only one way to deal with it,—to cast the whole thing away, depression, demands, doubts, sex-thoughts, the whole undesirable baggage, and have in its place the one true movement, the call for the consciousness and the presence of the Divine.

It may be that behind this persistence of the lower vital demand for satisfaction there was something not quite clear in the obscure part of the physical mind in your mental attitude towards the Yoga. You seem to regard this demand for

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the replacement of the old lower vital satisfactions by other joys and pleasures as something quite legitimate; but joys and pleasures are not the object of Yoga and a bargain or demand for a replacement of this kind can be no legitimate or healthy element in the sadhana. If it is there, it will surely impede the flow of spiritual experience. Ananda, yes; but Ananda and the spiritual happiness which precede it (*adhyatma sukham*) are something quite different from joys and pleasures. And even Ananda one cannot demand or make it a condition for pursuing the sadhana—it comes as a crown, a natural outcome and its true condition is the growth of the true consciousness, peace, calm, light, strength, the equanimity which resists all shocks and persists through success and failure. It is these things which must be the first objects of the sadhana, not any hedonistic experience even of the highest kind; for that must come of itself as a result of the Divine Presence.

Meanwhile, the first thing you must do is to throw out this perilous stuff of despondency and its accompaniments and recover a quiet and clear balance. A quiet mind and a quiet vital are the first conditions for success in sadhana.

21-3-1931

TRANSFORMATION OF THE VITAL NATURE

Aspiration for Peace and Joy—Vital Demand

IT is evident that you still cherish some misunderstanding about peace and joy and Ananda. (Peace, by the way, is not joy—for peace can be there even when joy is quiescent). It is not a fact that one ought not to pray or aspire for peace or spiritual joy. Peace is the very basis of all the siddhi in the Yoga, and why should not one pray or aspire for foundation in the Yoga? Spiritual joy or a deep inner happiness (not disturbed even when there come superficial storms or perturbations) is a constant concomitant of contact or union with the Divine, and why should it be forbidden to pray or aspire for contact with the Divine and the joy that attends it? As for Ananda, I have already explained that I mean by Ananda something greater than peace or joy, something that, like Truth and Light, is the very nature of the supramental Divine. It can come by frequent inrushes or descents, partially or for a time even now, but it cannot remain in the system so long as the system has not been prepared for it. Meanwhile, peace and joy can be there permanently, but the condition of this permanence is that one should have the constant contact or indwelling of the Divine, and this comes naturally not to the outer mind or vital but to the inner soul

or psychic being. Therefore one who wants his Yoga to be a path of peace or joy must be prepared to dwell in his soul rather than in his outer mental and emotional nature.

I objected in a former letter not to aspiration but to a demand, to making peace, joy or Ananda a condition for following the Yoga. And it is undesirable because if you do so, then the vital, not the psychic, takes the lead. When the vital takes the lead, then unrest, despondency, unhappiness can always come, since these things are the very nature of the vital—the vital can never remain constantly in joy and peace, for it needs their opposites in order to have the sense of the drama of life. And yet when unrest and unhappiness come, the vital at once cries, "I am not given my due, what is the use of my doing the Yoga?" Or else, it makes a gospel of its unhappiness and says that the path to fulfilment must be a tragic road through the desert. And yet it is precisely this predominance of the vital in us that makes a necessity of the passage through the desert. If the psychic were always there in front, the desert would be no longer a desert and the wilderness would blossom with the rose.

22-4-1931

TRANSFORMATION OF THE VITAL NATURE

Co-operation of the Vital Nature in Sadhana

I HAVE always told you that you ought not to stop your poetry and similar activities. It is a mistake to do so out of asceticism or with the idea of tapasya. One can stop these things when they drop of themselves, because one is full of experience and so interested in one's inner life that one has no energy to spare for the rest. Even then, there is no rule for giving up; for there is no reason why poetry etc. should not be part of sadhana. The love of applause, the desire for fame, the ego reaction have to be given up, but that can be done without giving up the activity itself. Your vital needs some activity—most vitals do—and to deprive it of its outlet, an outlet that can be helpful and not harmful, makes it sulking, indifferent and desponding or else inclined to revolt at any moment and throw up the sponge. Without the assent of the vital it is difficult to do sadhana—it non-co-operates, or it watches with a grim, even if silent dissatisfaction ready to express at any moment doubt and denial; or it makes a furious effort and then falls back saying, "I have got nothing." The mind by itself cannot do much, it must have support from the vital and for that the vital must be in a cheerful and acquiescent state. It has the joy of

creation and there is nothing spiritually wrong in creative action. Why deny your vital this joy of outflow?

I had already hinted to you that to be able to wait for the Divine Grace (not in a tamasic spirit but with a sattwic reliance) was the best course for you. Prayer, yes—but not prayer insisting on immediate fulfilment—but prayer that is itself a communion of the mind and heart with the Divine and can have the joy and satisfaction of itself, trusting for fulfilment by the Divine in his own time. Meditation? Yes, but your meditation has got into a wrong *asana*, that of an eager and vehement wrestling followed by a bitter despair. It is no use getting on with it like that: it is better to drop it till you get a new *asana*. (I am referring to the old Rishis who established an *asana*, a place and a fixed position, where they would sit still till they got siddhi—but if the *asana* got successfully disturbed by wrong forces like *asuras*, *apsaras*, etc., they left it and sought for a new one.) Moreover, your meditation is lacking in quietude: you meditate with a striving mind, but it is in the quiet mind that the experience comes, as all Yogis agree—the still water that reflects rightly the sun, the cup made empty before the *soma-rasa* of the spirit may be poured in it. Prepare the mind and heart till

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things begin to flow into them in a spontaneous current when all is ready.

May, 1933

The Vital-Physical

THE nervous part of the being is a portion of the vital—it is the vital-physical, the life-force closely enmeshed in the reactions, desires, needs, sensations of the body. The vital proper is the life-force acting in its own nature, impulses, emotions, feelings, desires, ambitions, etc., having as their highest centre what we may call the outer heart of emotion, while there is an inner heart where are the higher or psychic feelings and sensibilities, the emotions or intuitive yearnings and impulses of the soul. The vital part of us is, of course, necessary to our completeness, but it is a true instrument only when its feelings and tendencies have been purified by the psychic touch and taken up and governed by the spiritual light and power.

9-8-1943

Vital Energy in Work

DON'T be afraid of vital energy at work. Vital energy is an invaluable gift of God without which nothing can be done—as the Mother has always insisted from the beginning; it is given that His work may be done. I am very glad that it has come back and the cheerfulness and optimism with it—that is as it should be.... Let the energy have play—it can't but strengthen the being for the greater purpose.

Conquest of Vital Difficulties

ONCE the vital being has come forward and shown its difficulty—there is nobody who has not one crucial difficulty or another there—it must be dealt with and conquered.

It must be dealt with not by the mind but directly by the supramental power.

Not peace and knowledge in the mind, but peace, faith, calm strength in the vital being itself (and especially in this part of it that is defective) is the thing to be established. To open yourself and allow all this to be brought down into it is the proper course.

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The deficiency is not in the higher mind or mind proper; there is therefore no use in going back to establish mental peace. The difficulty is in that part of the vital being which is not sufficiently open and confident and not sufficiently strong and courageous and in the physical mind which lends its support to these things. To get the supramental light and calm and strength and intensity down there is what you need.

You may have all the mental knowledge in the world and yet be impotent to face vital difficulties. Courage, faith, sincerity towards the Light, rejection of opposite suggestions and adverse voices are there the true help. Then only can knowledge itself be at all effective.

Not mental control but some descent of a control from above the mind is the power demanded in the realisation. This control derived eventually from the Supermind is a control by the Divine Power.

24-4-1927

Irrational Doubts of the Vital

THE doubts of the sadhaks more often rise from the vital than from the true mental—when the vital goes wrong or is in trouble or depression, the doubts rise and repeat themselves in the same form and the same language, no matter how much the mind had been convinced by either patent proofs or intellectual answers. I have noticed that always the vital is irrational (even when it uses the reason to justify itself) and it believes or disbelieves according to its feeling, not according to reason.

21-1-1935

*Perception of Vital Deficiencies—
Replacement of Mental Control*

IF you see more clearly any deficiencies of your vital nature and the necessity of a transformation, that itself is a sign of psychic growth. They should not be a cause of discouragement, for these are common defects of the human vital, and by an increased psychic opening they will lose their hold and finally disappear.

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As for the diminution of mental control over the vital movements, that often happens temporarily in the course of the Yoga. Mental control has to be replaced by a greater control from above and by the calm, purity and strong peace of the vital itself opened to the Divine Force and its government of the whole nature.

Do not allow yourself to be troubled or discouraged by any difficulties, but quietly and simply open yourself to the Mother's force and allow it to change you.

10-3-1931

Risings of Vital Movements

THE exacerbation of certain vital movements is a perfectly well-known phenomenon in Yoga and does not mean that one has degenerated, but only that one has come to close grips instead of to a pleasant nodding acquaintance with the basic instincts of the earthly vital nature. I have had myself the experience of this rising to a height, during a certain stage of the spiritual development of things, that before hardly existed and seemed

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quite absent in the pure Yogic life. These things rise up like that because they are fighting for their existence—they are not really personal to you and the vehemence of their attack is not due to any “badness” in the personal nature. I dare say seven sadhaks out of ten have a similar experience. Afterwards when they cannot effect their object which is to drive the sadhak out of his sadhana, the whole thing sinks and there is no longer any vehement trouble. I repeat that the only serious thing about it is the depression created in you and the idea of inability in the Yoga that they take care to impress on the brain when they are at their work. If you can get rid of that, the violence of the vital attacks is only the phenomenon of a stage and does not in the end matter.

24-6-1932

Positive Opening

THE gloom and other difficulties come from a resistance of inertia in the lower vital and physical consciousness. What you have to do is to prepare the consciousness by getting rid of the inertia. A

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sattwic gladness and calm and confidence is the proper temperament for this Yoga; gloom, depression and weeping should not be indulged in, as they stand in the way of the opening, unless the tears are the psychic weeping of release or adoration or a moved love and bhakti. The progress made in controlling the sex and other rajasic movements of the lower vital is a good preparation, but not enough; by itself it is only the negative side, though indispensable. Aspire for a positive sattwic opening for strength, for light, for peace and do not worry or repine if the progress is slow at first, nor grudge the time and labour of preparation necessary before there can be a rapid advance in the Yoga.

3-12-1934

Sorrow in Sadhana

BUDDHISM is the turning away from *dukkha* and its causes to the attracting face of Nirvana. The *dukkhavada* did not exist in India, except in the theory of the Vaishnava *viraha*; otherwise it was not considered as a means or even a stage of the sadhana. But that does not mean that *dukkha*

does not come in the sadhana; it comes and has to be rejected and overcome, overpassed—excepting the psychic sorrow which does not disturb or depress but rather liberates the vital. To make a *vada* or gospel of sorrow is dangerous because sorrow, if indulged becomes a habit, sticks and few things, if once they stick, can be more sticky.

Suffering and Doubt

DISAPPOINTED vital desire must bring about suffering. Pain and suffering are necessary results of the Ignorance in which we live; men grow by all kinds of experience, pain and suffering as well as their opposites, joy and happiness and ecstasy. One can get strength from them if one meets them in the right way. Many take a joy in pain and suffering when associated with struggle or endeavour or adventure, but that is more because of the exhilaration and excitement of the struggle than because of suffering for its own sake. There is, however, something in the vital which takes joy in the whole of life, its dark as well as its bright sides. There is also something perverse in the vital which takes

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a kind of dramatic pleasure in its own misery and tragedy, even in degradation or in illness.

I don't think mere doubts can bring any gain; mental questioning can bring gains if it is in pursuit of truth, but questioning just for the sake of sceptical questioning or in a pure spirit of contradiction can only bring, when it is directed against the truths of the spirit, either error or a lasting incertitude. If I am always questioning the Light when it comes and refusing its offer of truth, the Light cannot stay in me, cannot settle; eventually, finding no welcome and no foundation in the mind, it will retire. One has to push forward into the Light, not always falling back into the darkness and hugging the darkness in the delusion that it is the real light. Whatever fulfilment one may feel in pain or in doubt belongs to the Ignorance; the real fulfilment is in the divine joy and the divine Truth and its certitude and it is that for which the Yogin strives. In the struggle he may have to pass through doubt, not by his own choice or will but because there is still imperfection in his knowledge.

6-2-1943

Vital's Attachment to Suffering

I HAVE never said that to overcome doubt is easy; it is difficult because it is the nature of something in the human physical mind to cling to doubt for its own sake. It is not easy to overcome gloom, depression, grief and suffering because something in the human vital clings to it and almost needs it as part of the drama of life. So also I have never said that sex, anger, jealousy, etc. were easy to overcome. I have said it was difficult because they were ingrained in the human vital and even if thrown out were always being brought into it either by its own habit or by the invasion of the general Nature and the resurgence of its old response. . . . The external consciousness—the physical mind and consciousness of man—hates its own suffering and if left to itself dislikes also to see others suffer. But if you will try to fathom the significance of your admission of liking drama or of the turn towards drama from which very few human beings escape, and if you go deep enough, you will find that there is something in the vital which likes suffering and clings to it for the sake of the drama. It is something below the surface, but it is strong, almost universal in human nature and difficult to eradicate unless one recognises it

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and gets inwardly away from it. The mind and the physical of man do not like suffering, for if they did, it would not be suffering any longer, but this thing in the vital wants it in order to give a spice to life. It is the reason why constant depressions can go on returning and returning even though the mind longs to get rid of them, because this in the vital responds, goes on repeating the same movement like a gramophone as soon as it is got going and insists on turning the whole round of the oft-repeated record. It does not really depend on the reasons which the vital gives for starting off to the round, these are often of the most trivial character and wholly insufficient to justify it. It is only by a strong will to detach oneself, not to justify, to reject, not to welcome that one can in the end get rid of this most troublesome and dangerous streak in human nature. When therefore we speak of the vital comedy, of the vital drama, we are speaking from a psychological knowledge which does not end with the surface of things but looks at these hidden movements. It is impossible to deal with things for the purposes of Yoga if we confine ourselves to the surface consciousness only: it is also quite according to the rule of these reactions that your despondency should have come immediately after a considerable progress in bhakti and the will to surrender in the inner being—

for it comes from the spirit of darkness which attacks the sadhak whenever it can and that spirit resents fiercely all progress made and hates the very idea of progress and its whole policy is to convince him by its attacks and suggestions that he has made none or that what progress he has made is after all null and inconclusive....

The laws of this world as it is are the laws of the Ignorance and the Divine in the world maintains them so long as there is the Ignorance; if he did not, the universe would crumble to pieces—*utsideyur ime lokah*, as the Gita puts it. There are also, very naturally, conditions for getting out of the Ignorance into the Light. One of them is that the mind of the sadhak should co-operate with the Truth and that his will should co-operate with the Divine Power which, however slow its action may seem to the vital or to the physical mind, is uplifting the nature towards the Light; when that co-operation is complete, the progress can be rapid enough. But the sadhak should not grudge the time and labour needed to make the co-operation fully possible to the blindness and weakness of human nature and effective.

All this call of yours for faith, sincerity, surrender is only an invitation to make that co-operation more easily possible. If the physical mind ceases to judge

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all things including those that it does not know or are beyond it, like the deeper things of the spirit, then it becomes easier for it to receive the Light and know by illumination and experience the things that it does not yet know. If the mental and vital will place themselves in the Divine Hand without reservation, then it is easier for the Power to work and produce tangible effects. If there is resistance, then it is natural that it should take more time and the work should be done from within or, as it might appear, underground so as to prepare the nature and undermine the resistance....

The Right Psychic Attitude in Sadhana

WHAT is needed is to profit by the discovery and get rid of the impediment. The Mother did not merely point out the impediment; she showed you very expressly how to get rid of it and at that time you understood her, though now (at the time of writing your letter to me) the light which you saw seems to have been clouded by your indulging your vital more and more in the bitter pastime of sadness. That was quite natural, for that is the result sadness always does bring. That is the reason why I object to

the gospel of sorrow and to any sadhana which makes sorrow one of its main planks (*abhimān*, revolt, *viraha*). For sorrow is not, as Spinoza pointed out, a passage to a greater perfection, a way to siddhi; it cannot be, for it confuses and weakens and distracts the mind, depresses the vital forces, darkens the spirit. A relapse from joy and vital elasticity and Ananda to sorrow, self-distrust, despondency and weakness is a recoil from a greater to a lesser consciousness,—the habit of these moods shows the clinging of something in the vital to the smaller, obscurer, dark and distressed movement out of which it is the very aim of Yoga to rise.

It is, therefore, quite incorrect to say that the Mother took away the wrong key with which you were trying to open the Faery Palace and left you with none at all. For she not only showed you the true key but gave it to you. It was not a mere vague exhortation to cheerfulness she gave you but she described exactly the condition felt in the right kind of meditation—a state of inner rest, not of straining, of quiet opening, not of eager or desperate pulling, a harmonious giving of oneself to the Divine Force for its workings and in that a sense of the Force working and a restful confidence and allowing it to work without any unquiet interference. And she asked you if you had not

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experienced that condition and you said you had and you knew it very well. Now that condition is the psychic opening and, if you have had it, you know what the psychic opening is; of course, there is much more that afterwards comes, but this is the fundamental condition in which it can most easily come. What you should have done was to keep the key the Mother gave you present in your consciousness and apply it—not to go back and allow sadness and the repining view of the past to grow upon you. In this condition, which you call the right or the psychic attitude, there may be call, prayer, aspiration; intensity, concentration will come of themselves, not by a hard effort or tense strain on the nature. Rejection of wrong movements, frank confession of defects are not only not incompatible, but helpful to it, but this attitude makes the rejection, the confession easy, spontaneous, entirely complete and sincere and effective. That is the experience of all who have consented to take this attitude.

I may say in passing that consciousness and receptivity are not the same thing; one may be receptive, yet externally unaware of how things are being done and of what is being done. The Force works, as I have repeatedly written, behind the veil. The results remain packed behind and come

out afterwards, often slowly, little by little, until there is so much pressure that it breaks through somehow and forces itself upon the external nature. There is a difference between a mental and a vital straining and pulling and a spontaneous psychic openness, and it is not at all the first time that we have spoken of the difference. The Mother and myself have written and spoken of it times without number and we have deprecated pulling* and straining and advocated the attitude of psychic openness. It is not really a question of the right or the wrong key, but of putting the key in the lock in the right or the wrong way; either, because of some difficulty, you try to force the lock turning the key this way or that with violence or confidently and quietly give it the right turn and the door opens.

It is not that the pulling and straining and tension can do nothing; in the end they prevail for some result or other, but with difficulty, delay, struggle, strong upheavals of the forces breaking through inspite of all. Ramakrishna himself began by pulling and straining and got his result, but at the cost of a tremendous and perilous upsetting; afterwards he took

*There is a steady drawing of the Force possible which is not what I mean by pulling—drawing of the Force is quite common and helpful.

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the quiet psychic way whenever he wanted a result and got it with ease and in a minimum time. You say that this way is too difficult for you or the likes of you and it is only "Avatars" like myself or the Mother that can do it. That is a strange misconception; for it is, on the contrary, the easiest and simplest and most direct way and any one can do it, if he makes his mind and vital quiet. . . . even those who have a tenth of your capacity can do it. It is the other way of tension and strain and hard endeavour that is difficult and needs a great force of tapasya. As for the Mother and myself, we have had to try all ways, follow all methods, to surmount mountains of difficulties, a far heavier burden to bear than you or anybody else in the Ashram or outside, far more difficult conditions, battles to fight, wounds to endure, ways to cleave through impenetrable morass and desert and forest, hostile masses to conquer—a work such as, I am certain, none else had to do before us. For the leader of the way in a work like ours has not only to bring down or represent and embody the Divine, but to represent too the ascending element in humanity and to bear the burden of humanity to the full and experience, not in a mere play or Lila but in grim earnest, all the obstruction, difficulty, opposition, baffled, hampered and only slowly victorious labour which are possible on the path. But it

is not necessary, nor tolerable that all that should be repeated over again to the full in the experience of others. It is because we have the complete experience that we can show a straighter and easier road to others—if they will only consent to take it. It is because of our experience won at a tremendous price that we can urge upon you and others, “Take the psychic attitude; follow the straight sunlit path, with the Divine openly and secretly upbearing you—if secretly, he will yet show himself in good time,—do not insist on the hard, hampered, round-about and difficult journey.”

You say that you were never pointed out all this before. But it is what we have been saying in season and out of season to everybody for a long time past. But you were not inclined to regard it as feasible or at least not ready to apply it in the field of meditation, because your consciousness by tradition, owing to past lives and other reasons, was clinging to former contrary conceptions. Something in you was harking back to the Vaishnava sadhana, and that tended to bring in its pain-giving feeling, elements of *abhimān*, revolt, suffering, the Divine hiding himself (“always I seek but never does he show himself”), the rarity of the unfolding and the *milan*. Something else in you was inclined to see as the only alternative some hard, grim, ascetic ideal, the blank featureless

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Brahman and imagined that the Supramental was that; something in the vital looked on the conquest of wrong movements as a hard, desperate tapasya, not as a passage into the purity and joy of the Divine; even now something in you seems to insist on regarding the psychic attitude as something extraordinary, difficult, unhuman and impossible.* There were these and other lingerings of the mind and the vital; you have to tear them out and look at the simplicity of the Truth with a straight and simple gaze.

It is not that there is anything peculiar in you in these difficulties; every sadhak entering the way has to get over similar impediments. It took me four years of inner striving to find a real way, even though the divine help was with me all the time, and even then, it seemed to come by an accident; and it took me ten more years of intense yoga under a supreme inner guidance to trace it out and that was because I had my past and the world's past to assimilate

*The Russellian fear of emptiness which is the form the active mind gives to silence. Yet it was on what you call emptiness, on the silence, that my whole Yoga was founded and it was through it that there came afterwards all the inexhaustible riches of a greater knowledge, will and joy, all the experiences of a greater mental, psychic and vital realms, all the ranges up to Overmind and beyond. The cup has often to be emptied before it can be new-filled; the Yogin, the sadhak ought not to be afraid of emptiness or silence.

and overpass before I could find and found the future.

But for you the remedy we propose, the key we offer to you, ought not to be difficult to apply as you imagine. After all, it is only applying in "meditation" the way that has been so successful with you in music and poetry. There is a way of producing poetry by strain and tension, by breaking of the brain, by hard and painful labour—often the passage clogged, and nothing coming or else coming only in return for a sort of intellectual tapasya. There is the other way in which one remains quiet and opens oneself to a power that is there behind and waits for inspiration; the force pours in and with it the inspiration, the illumination, the Ananda, all is done by an inner power. The flood passes but one remains quiet for the next flood and at its time surely it comes. Here all is not perfect at once but progress comes by ever-new waves of the same power. It is the same method that the Mother proposed to you for your meditation—if meditation it must be called—not a strain of mental activity but a restful opening to the Force that is there all the time above and around you, so that it may flow freely and do its work in peace, illumination and Ananda. The way has been shown to you, you yourself have had from time to time the true condition; only you must learn how to

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continue it or recover it and you must allow the Force to do its work in its own way. It may take some time to take entire hold of it, get the other habit out and to make this normal; but you must not start by deciding that it is impossible. It is eminently possible and it is that which everyone will have to do sooner or later; for this is the door of the definite entrance. The difficulty, the struggle were only for the period of preparation necessary to get rid of or to exhaust the obstructions in the consciousness which was a thorn-hedge around the Faery Palace.

5-5-1932

IV. VAIRAGYA

The Way of Vairagya

VAIRAGYA is certainly one way of progressing towards the goal—the traditional way and a drastic if painful one. To lose the desire for human vital enjoyments, to lose the passion for literary or other success, praise, fame, to lose even the insistence on spiritual success, the inner bhoga of Yoga, have always been recognised as steps towards the goal—provided one keeps the one insistence on the Divine. I prefer myself the calmer way of equality, the way pointed out by Krishna, than the more painful one of Vairagya. But if the compulsion in one's nature or the compulsion of one's inner being forcing its way by that means through the difficulties of the nature is on that line, it must be recognised as a valid line. What has to be got rid of in that case is the note of despair in the vital which responds to the cry you speak of—that it will never gain the Divine because it has not yet got the Divine or that there has been no progress. There has certainly been a progress, this greater push of the psychic, this very detachment itself always growing somewhere in you. The thing is

VAIRAGYA

to hold on, not to cut the cord which is pulling you up because it hurts the hands, to keep the one insistence if all the others fall away from you.

It is evident that something in you, continuing the unfinished curve of a past life, is pushing you on this path of Vairagya and the more stormy way of Bhakti,—in spite of our preference for a less painful one and yours also—something that is determined to be drastic with the outer nature so as to make itself free to fulfil its secret aspiration. But do not listen to these suggestions of the voice that says, “You shall not succeed and it is no use trying.” That is a thing that need never be said in the Way of the Spirit, however difficult it may seem at the moment to be. Keep through all the aspiration which you express so beautifully in your poems; for it is certainly there and comes out from the depths, and if it is the cause of suffering,—as great aspirations are, in a world and nature where there is so much to oppose them—it is also the promise and surety of emergence and victory in the future.

21-1-1936

Utility of Vairagya in Yoga

(1)

I HAVE objected in the past to vairagya of the ascetic kind and the tamasic kind. By the tamasic kind I mean that spirit which comes defeated from life, not because it is really disgusted with life, but because it could not cope with it or conquer its prizes; for it comes to Yoga as a kind of asylum for the maimed or weak and to the Divine as a consolation prize for the failed boys in the world-class. The vairagya of one who has tasted the world's gifts or prizes but found them insufficient or finally tasteless and turns away towards a higher and more beautiful ideal or the vairagya of one who has done his part in life's battles but seen that something greater is demanded of the soul, is perfectly helpful and a good gate to the Yoga. Also the sattwic vairagya which has learnt what life is and turns to what is above and behind life. By the ascetic vairagya I mean that which denies life and world altogether and wants to disappear into the Indefinable—I object to it for those who come to this Yoga because it is incompatible with my aim which is to bring the Divine into life. But if one is satisfied with life as it is, then there is no reason to seek to bring the

VAIRAGYA

Divine into life,—so vairagya in the sense of dissatisfaction with life as it is is perfectly admissible and even in a certain sense indispensable for my Yoga.

4-5-1934

(2)

I quite acknowledge the utility of a temporary state of vairagya as an antidote to the too strong pull of the vital. But vairagya always tends to a turning away from life and the tamasic element in vairagya—despair, depression, etc.—dilapidates the fire of the being and may lead in some cases to falling between two stools so that one loses earth and misses heaven. I therefore prefer to replace vairagya by a firm and quiet rejection of what has to be rejected—sex, vanity, ego-centrism, attachment, etc.—but that does not include rejection of the activities and powers that can be made instruments of the sadhana and the divine work, such as art, music, poetry, etc., though these have to find a new spiritual or psychic base, a deeper inspiration, a turn towards the Divine or things divine. Yoga can be done without the rejection of life, without killing or impairing the life-joy or the vital force.

26-2-1943

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Sattwic, Rajasic and Tamasic Vairagya

(1)

No, I didn't say that you chose the rajasic or tamasic vairagya. I only explained how it came, of itself, as a result of the movement of the vital in place of the sattwic vairagya which is supposed to precede and cause or accompany or result from a turning away from the world to seek the Divine. The tamasic vairagya comes from the recoil of the vital when it feels that it has to give up the joy of life and becomes listless and joyless; the rajasic vairagya comes when the vital begins to lose the joy of life but complains that it is getting nothing in its place. Nobody chooses such movements; they come independently of the mind as habitual reactions of the human nature. To refuse these things by detachment, an increasing quiet aspiration, a pure bhakti, an ardent surrender to the Divine, was what I suggested as the true forwarding movement.

6-6-1943

VAIRAGYA

(2)

There is the sattwic vairagya—but many people have the rajasic or tamasic kind. The rajasic is carried by a revolt against the conditions of one's own life, the tamasic arises from dissatisfaction, disappointment, a feeling of inability to succeed or face life, a crushing under the grips and pains of life. These bring a sense of the vanity of existence, a desire to seek something less miserable, more sure and happy or else to seek a liberation from existence here, but they do not bring immediately a luminous aspiration or pure aspiration with peace and joy for the spiritual attainment.

5-6-1936

Spiritual Life and Choice of a Career

ALL depends on the aim of the life. To one whose aim is to discover and possess the highest spiritual truth and the divine life, I do not think a University post can count for much, nor do I see that there can be any practical connection between them. It might be different if the aim were the life of a

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writer and thinker on the intellectual level only, without any higher flight or deeper seeking. I do not see that your unwillingness to commit yourself to this kind of work is due to any weakness. It is rather that only a small part of your nature, and that not the deepest or strongest part, would be satisfied with it or with the atmosphere in which it would have to be done.

In these matters it is not the thinking mind but the vital being—the life-force and the desire-nature, or some part of it at least—that usually determines men's action and their choice, when it is not some outward necessity or pressure that compels or mainly influences the decision. The mind is only an interpreting, justifying and devising agent. By your taking up the sadhana this part of your vital being has had a pressure put upon it from above and within, which has discouraged its old turn of desires and tendencies, its past grooves, those which would have decided its direction before; this vital has, as its often one first result, fallen silent and neutral. It is no longer strongly moved towards the ordinary life; it has not yet received from or through the psychic centre and the higher mental will a sufficient illumination and impulse to take up a new vital movement and run vigorously on the road to a new life. That is the reason

VAIRAGYA

for the listlessness of which you speak and the mistiness of the future....

15-5-1930

Difficulties of Sattwic Nature

OBVIOUSLY, the rajasic movements are likely to create more trouble in sadhana than the sattwic ones. The greatest difficulty of the sattwic man is the snare of virtue and self-righteousness, the ties of philanthropy, mental idealisations, family affections, etc., but except the first, these are, though difficult, still not so difficult to surpass or else transform. Sometimes, however, these things are as sticky as the rajasic difficulties.

16-10-1935

V. REMOVAL OF EGO

The Three Obstacles

THERE are three obstacles that one has to overcome in the vital and they are very difficult to overcome, lust (sexual desire), wrath and rajasic ego. Rajasic ego is the supporting ground of the other two.

9-4-1937

Ego in Human Nature

PRIDE is only one form of ego—there are ten thousand others. Every action of man is full of ego—the good ones as well as the bad, his humility as much as his pride, his virtues as much as his vices.

To get the ego out of the human nature is not so simple as that. If one is free from ego, does nothing with reference to himself or for his own sake but only for the Divine and all his thoughts and feelings are for the Divine, then he is Jivanmukta and a Siddha Yogi.

18-6-1934

REMOVAL OF EGO

Ego in the Body

THE mind and the vital are much more full of ego than the body.

Removal of Ego

EGO is not so easy to get rid of. It remains not only in spite of work but in spite of knowledge or bhakti. The disappearance of ego means complete Mukti. Even the Yogi who feels his separate being swallowed up in cosmic consciousness or some kind of Transcendent consciousness, yet when he comes to outward action and reaction finds the superficial ego still there. That is why the ascetic has a horror of action and says that without ego it can't be done. It can, but it is fully done only when these outermost things are fully taken up by the higher consciousness in their entirety.

Ego-centricity and God-centricity

YOUR nature like that of almost everybody has been largely ego-centric and the first stages of the sadhana

are with almost everybody ego-centric. The main idea in it is always one's own sadhana, one's own endeavour, one's own development, perfection, siddhi. It is inevitable for most, for without that personal endeavour there would not be sufficient will or push to bring about the first necessary changes. But none of these things—development, perfection or siddhi—can really come in any degree of completeness or unmixed finality until this ego-centric attitude changes into the God-centric, until it becomes the development, perfection, siddhi of the Divine Consciousness, its will and its instrumentation in this body—and that can only be when these things become secondary, and bhakti for the Divine, love for the Divine, oneness with the Divine in consciousness, will, heart and body, become the sole aim—the rest is then only the fulfilment of the Divine Will by the Divine Power. This attitude is never difficult for the psychic, it is its natural position and feeling, and whenever your psychic was in front, you had it in your central consciousness. But there were the outer mind, vital and physical that brought in their mixture of desire and ego and there could be no effective liberation in life and action till these were liberated. The thinking mind and higher vital can accept without too much difficulty, but the difficulty is with the lower vital and

REMOVAL OF EGO

physical and especially with the most external parts of them; for these are entirely creatures of habit, recurring movement, an obstinate repetition of the same movement always. This habit is so blind and obstinate and persistent as to seem almost invincible, especially when it is used at a juncture like this by the Forces of Ignorance as their last refuge or point of attack. But the apparent invincibility is not true. The most ego-centric can change and do change by the psychic principle becoming established in the external nature. That it can be done only by the Divine Grace and Power is true (that is true of all spiritual change)—but with the full consent of the being. As it was done in the inner being, so it can be done in the outer; give the adhesion of your full will and faith and, whatever the difficulty, it will be done.

Danger of Magnified Ego

(1)

THE egoism of the instrument can be as dangerous or more dangerous to spiritual progress than the egoism of the doer. The ego-sense is contrary to

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

spiritual realisation, so how can any kind of ego be a thing to be encouraged? As for the magnified ego, it is one of the most perilous obstacles to release and perfection. There should be no big I, not even a small one.

What is meant by the magnified ego is that when the limits of the ordinary mind and vital are broken, one feels a far vaster and more powerful consciousness and unlimited possibilities, but if one ties all that to the tail of one's own ego, then one becomes a thousand times more egoistic than the ordinary man. The greatness of the Divine becomes an excuse and a support for one's own greatness and the big I swells itself to fill not only the earth but the heavens. That magnification of the ego is a thing to be guarded against with a watchful care.

10-1-1934

(2)

Any one passing the border of ordinary consciousness can enter into this zone (intermediate zone), if he does not take care to enter into the psychic. In itself there is no harm in passing through, provided one does not stop there. But ego, sex, ambition, etc.,

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if they get exaggerated, can easily lead to a dangerous downfall.

March, 1936

Attack and Obstruction—Tamasic and Rajasic Ego

WHEN there is an attack or obstruction, the call or the thinking of the Mother may not succeed at once, even the will to get rid of the attack or obstruction may not succeed at once, but one must persevere till the result comes, and if one perseveres the result is bound to come.

One sees the negative side only during the attacks, because the first thing the attack or obstruction does is to try to cloud the mind's intelligence. If it cannot do that, it is difficult for it to prevail altogether for the time being. For if the mind remains alert and clings to the truth, then the attack can only upheave the vital and, though this may be painful enough, yet the right attitude of the mind acts as a corrective and makes it easier to recover the balance and the true condition of the vital comes back more quickly. If the vital keeps its balance, then the attack touches the physical consciousness only with its suggestions and is much more superficial or even it can do no

more than create a temporary restlessness, uneasiness or ill-health in the body—the rest of the consciousness remaining unaffected. It is therefore very important to accustom oneself to keep the right mental attitude even in the midst of an attack, however strong it is. To keep faith is the best help for that—the faith that the Divine is always there and I shall pass to him through whatever trials. That helps to look at other things also in the true light.

By tamasic ego is meant the ego of weakness, self-depreciation, despondency, unbelief. The rajasic ego is puffed up with pride and self-esteem or stubbornly asserts itself at every step or else wherever it can; the tamasic ego, on the contrary, is always feeling “I am weak, I am miserable, I have no capacity, I am not loved or chosen by the Divine, I am so bad and incapable—what can the Divine do for me?” Or else “I am especially chosen out for misfortune and suffering, all are preferred to me, all are progressing, I only am left behind, all abandons me, I have nothing before me but flight, death or disaster,” etc. etc., or something or all of these things mixed together. Sometimes the rajasic and tamasic ahankar mix together and subtly support each other. In both cases it is the “I” that is making a row about itself and clouding the true vision. The true spiritual or psychic vision is this: “Whatever I may be,

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my soul is a child of the Divine and must reach the Divine sooner or later. I am imperfect, but seek after the perfection of the Divine in me and that not I but the Divine Grace will bring about; if I keep to that, the Divine Grace itself will do all." The "I" has to take its proper place here as a small portion and instrument of the Divine, something that is nothing without the Divine but with the Grace can be everything that the Divine wishes it to be.

The Mother's help is always there but you are not conscious of it except when the psychic is active and the consciousness not clouded. The coming of suggestions is not a proof that the help is not there. Suggestions come to all, even to the greatest sadhaks or to the Avatars—as they came to Buddha or Christ. Obstacles are there—they are part of Nature and they have to be overcome. What has to be attained is not to accept the suggestions, not to admit them as the truth or as one's own thoughts, to see them for what they are and keep oneself separate. Obstacles have to be looked at as something wrong in the machinery of human nature which has to be changed—they should not be regarded as sins or wrongdoings which make one despair of oneself and of the sadhana.

5-2-1937

LETTERS OF SRĪ AUROBINDO

Sensitiveness

SENSITIVENESS is one of the most persistent obstacles of many sadhaks. There are two remedies for it—the psychic's confidence in the Mother and the surrender that goes with it, that is, "whatever she wills is best for me," and the vastness which you feel now;—it is the wideness of the true self, of the true mental, vital, physical being also, from which such things fall off like dust, for they are of no importance to it whatever.

It is the one thing to do, to get permanently into the wideness, peace and silence and let the ego dissolve into it and the attachments fall away.

28-8-1934

True Remedy for Sensitiveness

ONE has not to cure oneself of one's sensitiveness, but only acquire the power to rise to a higher consciousness taking such disenchantments as a sort of jumping-board. One way is not to expect even-square dealings from others, no matter who the others are. And besides, it is good to have such

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experiences of the real nature of some people to which a generous nature is often blind; for that helps the growth of one's consciousness. The blow you wince at seems to you so hard because it is a blow the world of your mental formation has sustained. Such a world often becomes a part of our being. The result is that a blow dealt to it gives almost physical pain. The great compensation is that it makes you live more and more in the real world in contradistinction to the world of your imagination which is what you would like the real world to be. But the real world is not all that could be desired, you know, and that is why it has to be acted upon and transformed by the Divine Consciousness. But for that, knowledge of the reality, however unpalatable, is almost the first requisite. This knowledge often enough is best brought home to us through blows and bleedings. True, idealistic people, sensitive people, refined natures smart under such disillusionments more than do others who are somewhat thick-skinned, but that is no reason why fine feelings should be deprecated and the keen edge of fine susceptibilities be blunted. The thing is to learn to detach oneself from any such experience and learn to look at such perversions of others from a higher altitude from where one can regard these manifestations in the

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proper perspective—the impersonal one. Then our difficulties really and literally become opportunities. For knowledge, when it goes to the root of our troubles, has in itself a marvellous healing-power as it were. As soon as you touch the quick of the trouble, as soon as you, diving down and down, get at what really ails you, the pain disappears as though by a miracle. Unflinching courage to reach true Knowledge is therefore of the very essence of Yoga. No lasting superstructure can be erected except on a solid basis of true Knowledge. The feet must be sure of their ground before the head can hope to kiss the skies.

25-6-1932.

Ungratefulness in Human Nature

YOUR surprise at X's behaviour shows that you do not yet know what kind of thing is the average human nature. Did you never hear of the answer of Vidyasagar when he was told that a certain man was abusing him,—“Why does he abuse me? I never did him a good turn (Upakar).” The unregenerate vital is not grateful for a benefit, it

REMOVAL OF EGO

resents being under an obligation. So long as the benefit continues, it is effusive and says sweet things, as soon as it expects nothing more it turns round and bites the hand that fed it. Sometimes it does that even before, when it thinks it can do it without the benefactor knowing the origin of the slander, fault-finding or abuse. In all these dealings of yours there is nothing unusual, nothing, as you think, peculiar to you. Most have this kind of experience, few escape it altogether. Of course, people with a developed psychic element are by nature grateful and do not behave in this way.

1-9-1931

VI. CONVERSION OF SEX: FOOD: SLEEP

The Sex-Impulse

THE sex-impulse is certainly the greatest force in the vital plane; if it can be sublimated and turned upwards, *ojas* is created which is a great help to the attainment of higher consciousness. But mere restraint is not sufficient.

Sex-Movement of Nature

ALL movements are in the mass movements of Nature's cosmic forces, they are movements of universal Nature. The individual receives something of them, a wave or pressure of some cosmic force, and is driven by it; he thinks it is his own, generated in himself separately, but it is not so, it is part of a general movement which works just in the same way in others. Sex, for instance, is a movement of general Nature seeking for its play and it uses this or that one—a man vitally or physically "in love" as it is called with a woman is

CONVERSION OF SEX: FOOD: SLEEP

simply repeating and satisfying the world-movement of sex; if it had not been that woman, it would have been another; he is simply an instrument in Nature's machinery, it is not an independent movement. So it is with anger and other Nature-motives.

17-3-1937

Control and Conversion of Sex-Energy

THE sex-energy utilised by Nature for the purpose of reproduction is in its real nature a fundamental energy of life. It can be used not for the heightening but for a certain intensification of the vital-emotional life; it can be controlled and diverted from the sex-purpose and used for aesthetic and artistic or other creation and productiveness or preserved for heightening of the intellectual or other energies. Entirely controlled it can be turned into a force of spiritual energy also. This was well-known in ancient India and was described as the conversion of 'retas' into 'ojas' by Brahmacharya. Sex-energy misused turns to disorder and disintegration of the life-energy and its powers.

4-3-1937

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Sex-Thrill and Pure Physical Ananda

THE terrestrial sex-movement is a utilisation by Nature of the fundamental physical energy for purposes of procreation. The thrill of which the poets speak, which is accompanied by a very gross excitement, is the lure by which she makes the vital consent to this otherwise unpleasing process; there are numbers who experience a recoil of disgust after the act and repulsion from the partner in it because of the disgust, though they return to it when the disgust has worn off for the sake of this lure.

The sex-energy itself is a great power with two components in its physical basis, one meant for procreation and the process necessary for it, the other for feeding the general energies of the body, mind and vital,—also of the spiritual energies of the body. The old Yogis call these two components *retas* and *ojas*. The European scientists generally pooh-poohed the idea, but now they are beginning to discover the same fact for themselves. As for the thrill,—the poets make so much of—it is simply a very gross distortion and degradation of the physical Ananda which by the Yoga can establish itself in the body, but this it cannot do so long as there is the sex-deviation.

April, 1935

CONVERSION OF SEX: FOOD: SLEEP

Transformation of Retas into Ojas

THAT is correct—if the sex-fluid is prevented from being spent away, it turns into *tejas* and *ojas*. The whole theory of *brahmacharya* is based upon that by the Yogis. If it were not so, there would be no need of *brahmacharya* for producing *tejas* and *ojas*.

It is not a question of vigour and energy *per se*, but of the physical support—in the physical support the *ojas* produced by *brahmacharya* counts greatly. The transformation of the *retas* into *ojas* is a transformation of physical substance into a physical (necessarily producing also a vital-physical) energy. The spiritual energy itself can only drive the body, like the vital and mental, but in driving it it would exhaust it if it has not a physical support. (I speak of course of the ordinary spiritual energy, not of the supramental to be, which has not only to transmute *retas* into *ojas* but *ojas* into something more sublimated.)

Sex-Glands in Future Evolution

As for scientists, the product of sex-glands is considered by them (at least so I have read) as a great

support and feeder of general energies. It has even been considered that sex-force has a great part to play in the production of poetry, art, etc. and in the action of genius generally. Finally, it is a doctor who has discovered that sex-fluid consists of two parts, one meant for sex-purposes, the other as a basis of general energy, and if the sex-action is not indulged, the first element tends to be turned into the second (*retas* into *ojas*, as the Yogis had already discovered). Theories? So are the statements or inferences of the opposite side—one theory is as good as another. Anyhow, I don't think that the atrophy of sex-glands by abstinence can be supported by general experience. X's contention is however logical if we take not individual results but the course of evolution and suppose that this evolution will follow the line of the old one, for these useless organs are supposed to disappear or deteriorate. But will the supramental evolution follow the same course as the old one or develop new adaptations of its own making?—that is the uncertain element.

4-12-1935

CONVERSION OF SEX: FOOD: SLEEP

Rejection of Sex-Desire

WHEN the waking consciousness has renounced the indulgence of the sexual desires and impulses, these take refuge in the subconscious as impressions, memories, suppressed desires and come up in sleep as dreams and involuntary sleep emissions. If the waking consciousness is not itself clear, if, that is to say, though there is no physical indulgence, yet there are imaginations in the mind or desires in the vital or the body, then these dreams and emissions can be frequent. Even if the waking consciousness is clear, the subconscious emergences can still come for a time, but in time they diminish. Some are able to get rid of this by putting a strong prohibiting will or force on the subconscious or on the sex-centre before going to sleep, but this does not succeed with everyone. The main thing is to get the increasing force of *brahmacharya* in the waking consciousness, complete expulsion of sex-thoughts, speech, physical craving or impulse—the subconscious remnants will either die out or be cleared out afterwards when one is able to bring the higher consciousness down here.

1-9-1937

Remedy for Sex-Dreams

(1)

APART from the total rejection of sex-thoughts and imaginations and actions, which ends by acting in the subconscient also, I don't know any remedy for sex-dreams except the putting of a force as concrete as possible on the sex-centre and organ prohibiting this urge and its result, put when about to sleep and renewed each time one wakes and goes to sleep again. But this all cannot manage to use, for they employ a mental will instead of a concrete force (the mental will can be effective, but is not always so). This method, besides, only acts for the time, it inhibits but except in rare cases does not permanently cure; it does not get rid of the sex-impressions in the subconscient, and of course it means thinking of the sex affair though only negatively.

I have heard it said that even very advanced Yogis get the dreams at least once in six months—I don't know how far it is true or what the Yogis themselves say about it. But the sex-impressions in the heart can be got rid of long before the end of life, and even the seed state in the subconscient which comes up in dreams, though sticky enough, is not quite so irremovable as all that.

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Anyway, the dreamkind is not so much to trouble about, unless it is frequent—it is the waking state that must be rigorously cleared out. Sometimes, if that is done, there is automatic extension of the habit of rejection to the subconscious, so that when the dream is coming there is an automatic prohibition that stops it. Under a regime like that I think the sex-pressure would become, if not non-existent, yet permanently quiescent in its seed state and so practically *non est*.

10-9-1944

(2)

The first thing necessary in such matters is to be perfectly calm and refuse to be upset by these difficulties. If they rise, one must take it that they do so in order to be worked out. If there is nothing in the waking consciousness to encourage the sex-difficulty, then these dreams or discharges without dreams can only be a rising up of old dormant impressions in the subconscious. Such risings often take place when the Force is working in the subconscious to clear it. It is also just possible that the discharges may be due, especially where there are no dreams, to purely material causes, e.g., the pressure of

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undischarged urine or faecal matter near the bladder. But in any case, the thing is not to be disturbed and to put a force or will on the sex-centre or sex-organ for these things to cease. This can be done just before sleeping. Usually after a time, if done regularly, it has an effect. A calm general pressure of will or force on the physical subconscious is to be put. The subconscious may be often obstinate in its continual persistence, but it can and does accommodate itself quickly or slowly to the will of the conscious being.

30-11-1936

Elimination of Sex-Thoughts

Is it that the body does not accept the sex-thoughts and desires? If so, you are entitled to reject it as something external to you or at most existing only in the subconscious. For it is only what something in us accepts, supports, takes pleasure in, or still mechanically responds to, that can still be called ours. If there is nothing of that, it belongs to general Nature but not to us. Of course, it returns and tries to take possession of its lost territory, but that is a foreign invasion. The rule of these things is that they have

CONVERSION OF SEX: FOOD: SLEEP

to be extruded outside the individual consciousness. Rejected by the mind and higher vital, they still try to hold on to the lower vital and physical. Rejected from the lower vital, they still hold the body by a physical desire. Rejected from the body, they retire into the environmental consciousness (sometimes into the subconscient also, rising in dreams)—I mean by the environmental a sort of surrounding atmosphere which we carry about with us and by which we communicate with the universal forces—and try to invade from there. Rejected from there, they become in the end too weak to be more than external suggestions till that too ends—and they are finished and non-existent.

Idleness and Sex

INACTIVITY is an atmosphere in which sex easily rises.

6-3-1938

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Association of Sex with Radha-Krishna Cult

THE coming of sex on seeing the image of Krishna and Radha is due to the past association of sex with the cult of Radha-Krishna. But in fact the image has nothing to do with sex. The true symbol for it would not be the human sex-attraction, but the soul, the psychic, hearing the call of the Divine and flowering into the complete love and surrender that brings the supreme Ananda. That is what Radha and Krishna by their divine union bring about in the human consciousness and it is so that you must regard it, throwing aside the old sex-associations.

23-9-1936

Mental, Vital and Physical Love

THERE are a number of women who can love with the mind, the psychic, the vital (heart), but they shrink from a touch on the body and even when that goes, the physical act remains abhorrent to them. They may yield under pressure, but it does not reconcile them to the act which always seems to them animal and degrading. Women know this, but men

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seem to find it hard to believe; but it is perfectly true.

Abnormal is a word which you can stick on anything that is not quite cheap and ordinary. In that way genius is abnormal, so is spirituality, so is the attempt to live by high ideals. The tendency to physical chastity in women is not abnormal, it is fairly common and includes a very high feminine type.

The mind is the seat of thought and perception, the heart is the seat of love, the vital of desire—but how does that prevent the existence of mental love? As the mind can be invaded by the feelings of the emotional or the vital, so the heart too can be dominated by the mind and moved by mental forces.

There is a vital love, a physical love. It is possible for the vital to desire a woman for various vital reasons without love—in order to satisfy the instinct of domination or possession, in order to draw in the vital forces of a woman so as to feed one's own vital, for the exchange of vital forces, to satisfy vanity, the hunter's instinct of the chase, etc., etc. (This is from man's view-point—but the woman also has her vital motives.) This is often called love, but it is only vital desire, a kind of lust. If, however, the emotions of the heart are awakened, then it becomes vital love—a mixed affair with any or all of these vital motives, strong, but still vital love.

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There may too be a physical love, the attraction of beauty, the physical sex-appeal or anything else of the kind awakening the emotions of the heart. If that does not happen, then the physical need is all and that is sheer lust, nothing more; but physical love is possible.

In the same way there can be a mental love. It arises from the attempt to find one's ideal in another or from some strong mental passion of admiration and wonder or from the mind's seeking for a comrade, a complement and fulfiller of one's nature, a *sahadharmin*, a guide and helper, a leader and master or from a hundred other mental motives. By itself that does not amount to love, though often it is so ardent as to be hardly distinguishable from it and may even push to sacrifice of life, entire self-giving, etc., etc. But when it awakes the emotions of the heart, then it may lead to a very powerful love which is yet mental in its root and dominant character. Ordinarily, however, it is the mind and vital together which combine; but this combination can exist along with a disinclination or positive dislike for the physical act and its accompaniments. No doubt, if the man presses, the woman is likely to yield, but it is *contre cœur*, as they say, against her feelings and their deepest instincts.

CONVERSION OF SEX: FOOD: SLEEP

. It is an ignorant psychology that reduces everything to the sex-motive and the sex-impulse.

1935

Importance of Food in Sadhana

I THINK the importance of sattwic food from the spiritual point of view has been exaggerated. Food is rather a question of hygiene, and many of the sanctions and prohibitions laid down in ancient religions had more a hygienic than a spiritual motive. The Gita's definitions seem to point in the same direction—tamasic food, it seems to say, is what is stale or rotten with the virtue gone out of it, rajasic food is that which is too acrid, pungent, etc., heats the blood and spoils the health, sattwic food is what is pleasing, healthy, etc. It may well be that different kinds of food nourish the action of the different gunas and so indirectly are helpful or harmful apart from their physical action. But that is as far as one can go confidently. What particular eatables are or are not sattwic is another question and more difficult to determine. Spiritually, I should say that the effect of food depends more on the occult atmosphere and influences that come

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with it than on anything in the food itself. Vegetarianism is another question altogether; it stands, as you say, on a will not to do harm to the more conscious forms of life for the satisfaction of the belly.

As for the question of practising to take all kinds of food with equal *rasa*, it is not necessary to practise nor does it really come by practice. One has to acquire equality within in the consciousness and as this equality grows, one can extend it or apply it to the various fields of the activity of the consciousness.

3-1-1937

Food and Sleep in Sadhana

THE first thing I tell people when they want not to eat or sleep is that no Yoga can be done without sufficient food and sleep (see the Gita on this point). Fasting or sleeplessness make the nerves morbid and excited and weaken the brain and lead to delusions and fantasies. The Gita says, Yoga is not for one who eats too much or sleeps too much, neither is it for one who does not eat or does not

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sleep, but if one eats and sleeps suitably—*yuktahari yuktanidrah*—then one can do it best. It is the same with everything else. How often have I said that excessive retirement was suspect to me and that to do nothing but meditate was a lop-sided and therefore unsound sadhana?

6-2-1935

Vital Movements and Digestion

YOGICALLY, psycho-physically, etc. etc., stomach, heart and intestine lodge the vital movements, not the physical consciousness—it is there that anger, fear, love, hate and all other psychological privileges of the animal tumble about and upset physical and moral digestion. The Muladhara is the seat of the physical consciousness proper.

Difficulty of Sleep in Meditation

WHEN one tries to meditate, there is a pressure to go inside, lose the waking consciousness and wake

inside, in a deep inner consciousness. But at first the mind takes it for a pressure to go to sleep, since sleep is the only kind of inner consciousness to which it has been accustomed. In Yoga by meditation sleep is therefore often the first difficulty—but if one perseveres, then gradually the sleep changes to an inner conscious state.

VII. MADNESS IN YOGA

Causes of Madness in Sadhana

(1)

I MUST say however that it is not the push for union with the Divine nor is it the Divine Force that leads to madness—it is the way in which people themselves act with regard to their claim for these things. To be more precise, I have never known a case of collapse in Yoga as opposed to mere difficulty or negative failure,—a case of dramatic disaster in which there was not one of three causes—or more than one of the three at work. First, some sexual aberration—I am not speaking of mere sexuality which can be very strong in the nature without leading to collapse—or an attempt to sexualise spiritual experience on an animal or gross material basis; second, an exaggerated ambition, pride or vanity trying to seize on spiritual force or experience and turn it to one's own glorification ending in megalomania; third, an unbalanced vital and a weak nervous system apt to follow its own imaginations and unruly impulses without any true mental will or strong mental will to steady or res-

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train it, and so at the mercy of the imaginations and suggestions of the adverse vital world when carried over the border into the intermediate zone of which I spoke in a recent message*. All the causes of collapse have been due to these three causes—to the first two mostly. Only three or four of them have ended in madness—and in these the sexual aberration was invariably present; usually a violent fall from the way is the consequence. X is no exception to the rule. It is not because X pushed for union with the Divine that X went mad, but because X misused what came down for a mystic sexuality and the satisfaction of megalomaniac pride, in spite of my repeated and insistent warnings.

2-12-1932

Descent of Grace and Disturbances

As to gratitude, it is a psychic feeling and all that is psychic helps the soul to flower. There is nothing wrong from the spiritual point of view in emotion. The only thing is that it should not become a tie of bondage in the path.

* *Vide The Riddle of this World* (3rd Ed.), p. 51

It is quite impossible for the descent of the Divine Grace to produce nausea and nervousness—to think so is self-contradictory. Sometimes when one has pulled or strained, there is a headache or a sensation as if of headache, or if one pulls down too much Force then there may be a giddiness, but one has only to remain quiet and that sets itself right by an assimilation of what has come down or otherwise. There is never any adverse or troublesome after-consequence.

The idea that X was sent mad by a Divine Force is an absurdity and an irrational superstition. People go mad because they have a physical predisposition due either to heredity or to some kind of organic cause or secret illness like syphilis, the action being often brought up by some psychological factor (ambition turning to megalomania, hypochondria, melancholia, etc.) All that happens in everyday life and not only in Yoga: the same causes work here. The one thing is that there may be an invasion of an alien Force bringing about the upsetting, but it is not the Divine Force, it is a vital Force that invades. The Divine Force cannot by its descent be the cause of madness any more than it can be of apoplexy or any other physical illness. If there is no predisposition, one may have all kinds of attacks from vital or other forces or from one's

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own movements of the lower nature, as violent as possible, but there will be no madness.

October, 1936

Descent of Ananda and Disturbances

It is quite possible that if a too intense Ananda is allowed before the purity and peace are in the nature, it may disturb the system—though I don't know whether there is any instance of madness as a consequence. At any rate, it is a fact that normally Ananda comes (in the natural course, I mean, if not pulled down) only occasionally so long as the peace and purity are not there as a base. It is probably right that it should be so.

13-12-1936

Danger of Descent in Mind and Vital

THE danger of the mental forces is when the higher consciousness descends they tend (unless there is

MADNESS IN YOGA

a deep silence) to become active in the consciousness for forming ideas of a mental type which can always be misapplied. First there should be a basis of entire calm, peace and silence—if there is activity, it should be that of a knowledge coming down and the mind silent receiving it accurately. This you can easily have, provided the mind is quiet.

The danger of the vital is that of taking hold of love, Ananda, the sense of Beauty and using it for its own purposes, for vital human relations or interchange or else some kind of mere enjoyment of its own.

. 4-1-1935

Epilepsy and Insanity

EPILEPSY is not possession—it is an attack or at most a temporary seizure. Insanity always indicates possession. The hereditary conditions create a predisposition. It is not possible for a vital Force or Being to invade or take possession unless there are doors open for it to enter. The door may be a vital consent or affinity or a physical defect in the being. . . .

SECTION TWELVE

TRANSFORMATION OF THE INCONSCIENT
—THE PRESENT WORLD SITUATION

Opening the Inconscient to Light

THERE is another cause of the general inability to change which at present afflicts the sadhak. It is because the sadhana, as a general fact, has now and for a long time past come down to the Inconscient; the pressure, the call is to change in that part of the nature which depends directly on the Inconscient, the fixed habits, the automatic movements, the mechanical repetitions of the nature, the involuntary reactions to life, all that seems to belong to the fixed character of a man. This has to be done if there is to be any chance of a total spiritual change. The Force (generally and not individually) is working to make that possible, its pressure is for that,—for, on the other levels, the change has already been made possible (not, mind you, assured to everybody). But to open the Inconscient to light is a herculean task; change on the other levels is much easier. As yet this work has only begun and it is not surprising that there seems to be no change in things or people. It will come in time, but not in a hurry.

As for experiences, they are all right but the trouble is that they do not seem to change the nature, they

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only enrich the consciousness—even the realisation, on the mind level, of the Brahman seems to leave the nature almost where it was, except for a few. That is why we insist on the psychic transformation as the first necessity—for that does change the nature—and its chief instrument is bhakti, surrender, etc.

27-4-1944

Change of Earth-Consciousness

THE earth-consciousness does not want to change, so it rejects what comes down to it from above—it has always done so. It is only if those who have taken this Yoga open themselves and are willing to change their lower nature that this unwillingness can disappear.

What stands in the way, of course, is always the vital ego with its ignorance and the pride of its ignorance, and the physical consciousness with its inertia which resents and resists any call to change and its indolence which does not like to take the trouble—it finds it more comfortable to go on its own way repeating always the same old movements and, at best,

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expecting everything to be done for it in some way at some time.

The first thing is to have the right inner attitude—you have that; the rest is the will to transform oneself and the vigilance to perceive and reject all that belongs to the ego and the tamasic persistence of the lower nature. Finally, to keep oneself always open to the Mother in every part of the being so that the process of transformation may find no hindrance.

April, 1938

Basic Stabilisation in the Physical Being

For your sadhana it is necessary first to establish the entire openness of the physical being and stabilise in it the descent of calm, strength, purity and joy with the feeling of the presence and the working of the Mother's Force in you. It is only on that assured basis that one can become an entirely effective instrument for the work. Once that is done, there is still the dynamic transformation of the instrumental being to achieve and that depends on a descent of a higher and higher power of consciousness into the mind, vital and body—by “higher” being meant

nearer and nearer to the supramental Light and Force. But that can only be done on the basis of which I have spoken and with the psychic being constantly in front and acting as an intermediary between the instrumental mind, vital and body and these higher planes of Being. So this basic stabilisation must first be completed.

. 25-4-1933

Removal of Physical Restlessness

YES, this is the time when you have to persist till you are quite settled in the inner consciousness and the persistence of the silence and peace is a sign that it is now possible. When one feels this kind of silence, peace and wideness, one may be sure that it is that of the true being, the real self, penetrating into the mind and vital and perhaps also the physical consciousness (if it is complete). The restlessness of the physical is probably due to the peace and silence having touched the physical but not yet penetrated the material or body consciousness. The old restlessness is there in the body struggling to remain, although it cannot invade either mind or vital or even in a general way the physical consciousness as a

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whole. If the peace descends there, the restlessness will disappear.

The sex-sensation comes from the waking subconscious. When it is unable to manifest in the waking consciousness, it comes up from the subconscious in sleep. The mind must not allow itself to be disturbed—it will go out with the rest.

20-9-1934

Breaking of Physical Habits

THE physical is the slave of certain forces which create a habit and drive it through the mechanical power of the habit. So long as the mind gives consent, you do not notice the slavery; but if the mind withdraws its consent, then you feel the servitude, you feel a force pushing you in spite of the mind's will. It is very obstinate and repeats itself till the habit, the inner habit revealing itself in the outward act, is broken. It is like a machine which once set in motion repeats the same movement. You need not be alarmed or distressed; a quiet persistent aspiration will bring you to the point where the habit breaks and you are free.

21-11-1932

Overcoming the Physical Obstacle

THE sense of helplessness, of impossibility of removal of the obstacle, is like the obscurity itself a characteristic of the physical consciousness which is inert and mechanical and accustomed to be moved inertly by whatever forces take hold of it. But this sense of helplessness or impossibility is unreal and not to yield to it, not to accept it, to remove it, is quite possible and very necessary for overcoming the physical obstacle which would otherwise greatly delay the progress.

20-1-1934

Gross and Subtle Physical—Material Vital

(1)

By the gross physical is meant the earthly and bodily physical—as experienced by the outward sense-mind and senses. But that is not the whole of Matter. There is a subtle physical also with a subtler consciousness in it which can, for instance, go to a distance from the body and yet feel and be

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aware of things in a not merely mental or vital way. As for mind and vital, they are everywhere—there is an obscure mind and life even in the cells of the body, the stones or in molecules and atoms.

3-3-1933

(2)

Everything has a physical part—even the mind has a physical part; there is a mental physical, a mind of the body and the material. So the emotional being has a physical part. It has no location separate from the rest of the emotional. One can only distinguish that when the consciousness becomes sufficiently subtle to do so.

7-11-1933

(3)

I do not know about subtle vital. One says subtle physical to distinguish from gross material physical, because to our normal experience all physical is gross, *sthula*. But the vital is in its nature non-material, so that the adjective is superfluous. By material vital we mean the vital so involved in

Matter as to be bound by its movements and gross physical character; the action is to support and energise the body and keep in it the capacity of life, growth, movement, etc., also of sensitiveness to outside impacts.

*The Sunlit Path—Obstruction of the
Inconscient Tamas*

THE sunlit path can only be followed if the psychic is constantly or usually in front or if one has a natural spirit of faith and surrender or a face turned habitually towards the sun or if one has acquired the psychic turn. That does not mean that the sunlit man has no difficulties; he may have many, but he regards them cheerfully as "all in the day's work". If he gets bad beatings, he is capable of saying, "Well, that was a queer go but the Divine is evidently in a queer mood and if that is his way of doing things, it must be the right one; I am surely a still queerer fellow myself and that I suppose, was the only means of putting me right." But everybody can't be of that turn, and surrender which would put everything right is, as you say, difficult to do completely. That is why we do not

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insist on total surrender at once, but are satisfied with a little to begin with, the rest to grow as it can.

I have explained to you why so many people (not by any means all) are in this gloomy condition, dull and despondent. It is the *tamas*, the inertia of the Inconscient, that has got hold of them. But also it is the small physical vital which takes only an interest in the small and trivial things of the ordinary daily and social life and nothing else. When formerly the *sadhana* was going on on higher levels (mind, higher vital, etc.), there was plenty of vigour and verve and interest in the details of the Ashram work and life as well as in an inner life; the physical vital was carried in the stream. But for many this has dropped; they live in the unsatisfied vital physical and find everything desperately dull, gloomy and without interest or issue. In their inner life the *tamas* from the Inconscient has created a block or a bottleneck and they do not find any way out. If one can keep the right condition and attitude, a strong interest in work or a strong interest in *sadhana*, then this becomes quiescent. That is the malady. Its remedy is to keep the right condition and to bring gradually or, if one can, swiftly the light of the higher aspiration into this part of being also, so that whatever

the conditions of the environment, it may keep also the right poise. Then the sunlit path should be less impossible.

16-6-1944

Hostile Attack of Physical Inertia

It is more the lack of sleep that is responsible, I think; also the excess of struggle which the constant pressure of the vital disturbances and the physical *tamas* bring in and by that weaken the nerves.

Like the vital disturbance the physical inertia with all its symptoms is an attack of the hostile forces intended to cut short and prevent the higher opening. The ideas that arise to justify it are of no value—it is not true that physical work is of an inferior value to mental culture, it is the arrogance of the intellect that makes the claim. All work done for the Divine is equally divine, manual labour done for the Divine is more divine than mental culture done for one's own development, fame or mental satisfaction.

This inertia, numbness, pain should be thrown off with the same resolution as the vital disturbances,

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The only peculiarity of it in your case is the persistent violence of the attack as in the case of the vital—otherwise, it is what others get also, but each time they reject, call on the Mother and get free, after a little time if the attack is violent, at once if it is of a lesser character.

If there is temporary physical inability, one can take rest, but solely for the purpose of recovering the physical energy. The idea of giving up physical work for mental self-development is a creation of the mental ego.

26-11-1933

Struggle on the Physical Plane

WHATEVER point the adverse forces choose for attack, however small it may seem to the external human mind, becomes a crucial point and to yield it up may be to yield to them one of the keys of the fortress. Even if it is a small postern door, it is enough for them if they can enter.

Nothing is really small and unimportant in the Great Path. Especially, when the struggle has come down to the physical level, these distinctions cease to have any value; for there “small” things have

a not easily calculable index value and are of great importance. On that level to lose a small post may be to make certain the loss of the big battle.

All have had to pass through the ordeal and test through which you are passing. We would have avoided it for you if it had been possible, but since it has come we look to you to persist and conquer. Patience, quiet endurance, calm resolution to go through to the end and triumph, these are the qualities now required of you—the less spectacular but more substantial of the warrior virtues.

Also, perspicacity and vigilance. Do not shut your eyes to the difficulty in you or turn away from it, but also let it not discourage you. Victory is certain if we persevere, and what price of difficulty and endeavour can be too great for such a conquest?

1927

*Approach of the Higher Light and Hostile
Attacks*

(I)

ABOUT the attacks and the action of the cosmic forces—these attacks very ordinarily become violent

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when the progress is becoming rapid and on the way to be definite—especially if they find they cannot carry out an effective aggression into the inner being, they try to shake by outside assaults. One must take it as a trial of strength, a call for gathering all one's capacities of calm and openness to the Light and Power, so as to make oneself an instrument for the victory of the Divine over the undivine, of the Light over the darkness in the world-tangle. It is in this spirit that you must face these difficulties till the higher things are to be confirmed in you so that these forces can attack no longer.

24-12-1933

(2)

The things enumerated are not causes of the attacks, but they are the occasion, the weakness in the sadhaks that allows them when they could very well be dismissed. The hostile forces are there in the world to maintain the Ignorance—they were there in the sadhana, because they had the right to test the sincerity of the sadhaks in their power and will to cleave to the Divine and overcome all difficulties. But this is only so long as the higher Light has

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not descended into the physical; now it is descending, it is sufficiently there for anyone to receive it more and more fully, so that the way becomes smooth and open, a progressive development and not a struggle.

10-11-1933

(3)

He is quite right in saying that the heaviness of these attacks was due to the fact that you had taken up the sadhana in earnest and were approaching, as one might say, the gates of the Kingdom of Light. That always makes these forces rage and they strain every nerve and use or create every opportunity to turn the sadhak back or, if possible, drive him out of the path altogether by their suggestions, their violent influences and their exploitation of all kinds of incidents that always crop up more and more when these conditions prevail, so that he may not reach the gates. I have written to you more than once alluding to these forces, but I did not press the point because I saw that like most people whose minds have been rationalised by a modern European education you were not inclined to believe in or at least to attach any importance to this knowledge. People

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nowadays seek the explanation for everything in their ignorant reason, their surface experience and in outside happenings. They do not see the hidden forces and inner causes which were well-known and visualised in the traditional Indian and Yogic knowledge. Of course, these forces find their *point d'appui* in the sadhak himself, in the ignorant parts of his consciousness and its assent to their suggestions and influences; otherwise, they could not act or at least could not act with any success. In your case the chief *points d'appui* have been the extreme sensitiveness of the lower vital ego and now also the physical consciousness with all its fixed or standing opinions, prejudices, prejudgments, habitual reactions, personal preferences, clinging to old ideas and associations, its obstinate doubts and its maintaining these things as a wall of obstruction and opposition to the larger light. This activity of the physical mind is what people call intellect and reason, although it is only the turning of a machine in a circle of mental habits and is very different from the true and free reason, the higher Buddhi, which is capable of enlightenment and still more from the higher spiritual light or that insight and tact of the psychic consciousness which sees at once what is true and right and distinguishes it from what is wrong and false. This insight you had very constantly whenever you were in a good

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condition and especially whenever Bhakti became strong in you. When the sadhak comes down into the physical consciousness, leaving the mental and higher vital ranges on which he had first turned towards the Divine, these opposite things become very strong and sticky and, as one's more helpful states and experiences draw back behind the veil and one can hardly realise that one ever had them, it becomes difficult to get out of this condition. The only thing then, as K has told you and I also have insisted, is to stick it out. If once one can get and keep the resolution to refuse to accept the suggestions of these forces, however plausible they may seem, then either quickly or gradually this condition can diminish and will be overpassed and cease. To give up Yoga is no solution....

20-10-1946

Conquest of the Physical Bed-rock

THE opportunity for these contrary forces is given when the sadhak descends in the inevitable course of the sadhana from the mental or the higher vital plane to the physical consciousness. Always this is

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accompanied by a fading of the first deep experiences and a descent to the neutral obscure inertia which is the bed-rock of the unredeemed physical nature. It is there that the Light, the Power, the Ananda of the Divine has to descend and transform everything, driving away for ever all obscurity and all inertia and establishing the radiant Energy, the perfect Light and the unchanging Bliss. There and not in the mind or the higher vital is all the difficulty, but there too must be the victory and the foundation of the new world. I do not wish to disguise from you the difficulty of this great and tremendous change or the possibility that you may have a long and hard work before you, but are you really unwilling to face it and take your share in the great work? Will you reject the greatness of this endeavour to follow a mad irrational impulse towards some more exciting work of the hour or the moment for which you have no true call in any part of your nature?

There is no true reason for despondency; in nothing that has passed do I find any good ground for it. The difficulties you experience are nothing to those that others have felt and yet conquered them, others who were not stronger than you. All that has happened is that by this descent into the physical consciousness the ordinary external human nature has come to the front with its elemental imperfec-

tions and subconscient unsatisfied impulses and it is to these that the contrary force is appealing. The mind and the higher vital have put away from them the ideas and illusions which gave them a sanction, an illusion of legitimacy and even nobility in their satisfaction. But the root of them, their inherent irrational push for satisfaction, has not yet gone—this, for instance, is the reason for the sexual movements which you have recently felt in sleep or in waking. This was inevitable. All that is needed is for your psychic being to come forward and open you to the direct and real and constant inner contact of myself and the Mother. Hitherto your soul has expressed itself through the mind and its ideals and admirations or through the vital and its higher joys and aspirations; but that is not sufficient to conquer the physical difficulty and enlighten and transform Matter. It is your soul in itself, your psychic being that must come in front, awaken entirely and make the fundamental change. The psychic being will not need the support of intellectual ideas or outer signs and helps. It is that alone that can give you the direct feeling of the Divine, the constant nearness, the inner support and aid. You will not then feel the Mother remote or have any further doubt about the realisation; for the mind thinks and the vital craves, but the soul feels and knows the Divine.

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Cast away from you these movements of doubt, depression and the rest which are no part of your true and higher nature. Reject these suggestions of inability, unfitness and all these irrational movements of an alien force. Remain faithful to the Light of your soul even when it is hidden by clouds. My help and the Mother's will be there working behind even in the moments when you cannot feel it. The one need for you and for all is to be, even in the darkness of the powers of obscurity of the physical consciousness, stubbornly faithful to your soul and to the remembrance of the Divine Call. Be faithful and you will conquer.

30-3-1930

The Darkest Night before Dawn

THESE are things which come almost inevitably in one degree or another at a certain critical stage through which almost everyone has to pass and which usually lasts for an uncomfortably long time but which need not be at all conclusive or definitive. Usually if one persists, it is the period of darkest night before the dawn which comes to every or

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almost every spiritual aspirant. It is due to a plunge one has to take into the sheer physical consciousness unsupported by any true mental light or by any vital joy in life, for these usually withdraw behind the veil, though they are not, as they seem to be, permanently lost. It is a period when doubt, denial, dryness, greyness and all kindred things come up with a great force and often reign completely for a time. It is after this stage has been successfully crossed that the true light begins to come, the light which is not of the mind but of the spirit. The spiritual light, no doubt, comes to some to a certain extent and to a few to a considerable extent, in the earlier stages, though that is not the case with all—for some have to wait till they can clear out the obstructing stuff in the mind, vital and physical consciousness, and until then get only a touch now and then. But even at the best this earlier spiritual light is never complete until the darkness of the physical consciousness has been faced and overcome. It is not by one's own fault that one falls into this state, it can come when one is trying one's best to advance. It does not really indicate any radical disability in the nature but certainly it is a hard ordeal and one has to stick very firmly to pass through it. It is difficult to explain these things because the psychological necessity is difficult for

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the ordinary human reason to understand or to accept.

25-7-1946

The Present World-Situation

(1)

THE extreme acuteness of your difficulties is due to the Yoga having come down against the bed-rock of Inconscience which is the fundamental basis of all resistance in the individual and in the world to the victory of the Spirit and the Divine Work that is leading toward that victory. The difficulties themselves are general in the Ashram as well as in the outside world. Doubt, discouragement, diminution or loss of faith, waning of the vital enthusiasm for the ideal, perplexity and a baffling of the hope for the future are the common features of the difficulty. In the world outside there are much worse symptoms such as the general increase of cynicism, a refusal to believe in anything at all, a decrease of honesty, an immense corruption, a preoccupation with food, money, comfort, pleasure, to the exclusion of higher things, and a general expectation of worse and worse things awaiting the world. All that, however acute,

is a temporary phenomenon for which those who know anything about the workings of the world, energy and the workings of the Spirit were prepared. I myself foresaw that this worst would come, the darkness of night before the dawn; therefore I am not discouraged. I know what is preparing behind the darkness and can see and feel the first signs of its coming. Those who seek for the Divine have to stand firm and persist in their seeking; after a time, the darkness will fade and begin to disappear and the Light will come.

9-4-1947

(2)

I know that this is a time of trouble for you and everybody. It is so for the whole world. Confusion, trouble, disorder and upset everywhere is the general state of things. The better things that are to come are preparing or growing under a veil and the worse are prominent everywhere. The one thing is to hold on and hold out till the hour of light has come.

2-6-1946

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(3)

I am afraid I can hold out but cold comfort—for the present at least—to those of your correspondents who are lamenting the present state of things. Things are bad, are growing worse and may at any time grow worst or worse than worst if that is possible—and anything, however paradoxical, seems possible in the present perturbed world. The best thing for them is to realise that all this was necessary because certain possibilities had to emerge and be got rid of, if a new and better world was at all to come into being; it would not have done to postpone them for a later time. It is, as in Yoga, where things active or latent in the being have to be put into action in the light so that they may be grappled with and thrown out or to emerge from latency in the depths for the same purificatory purpose. Also they can remember the adage that night is darkest before dawn and that the coming of dawn is inevitable. But they must remember too that the new world whose coming we envisage is not to be made of the same texture as the old and different only in pattern, and that it must come by other means—from within and not from without; so the best way is not to be too much preoccupied with the lamentable things that are happening outside, but themselves to grow

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within so that they may be ready for the new world, whatever the form it may take.

17-7-1948

Explanation of the Present Appearance of Things

A cosmos or universe is always a harmony, otherwise it could not exist, it would fly to pieces. But as there are musical harmonies which are built out of discords partly or even predominantly, so this universe (the material) is disharmonious in its separate elements—the individual elements are at discord with each other to a large extent; it is only owing to the sustaining Divine Will behind that the whole is still a harmony to those who look at it with the cosmic vision. But it is a harmony in evolution in progress—that is, all is combined to strive towards a goal which is not yet reached, and the object of our Yoga is to hasten the arrival to this goal. When it is reached, there will be a harmony of harmonies substituted for the present harmony built up on discords. This is the explanation of the present appearance of things.

21-3-1933

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Action of the Secret Will behind the Cosmic Forces

IN the play of the cosmic forces, the will in the cosmos—as one might say—does not always work apparently in favour of a smooth and direct line for the work or the sadhana; it often brings in what seems to be upheavals, sudden turns which break or deflect the line, opposing or upsetting circumstances or perplexing departures from what had been temporarily settled or established. The one thing is to preserve equanimity and make an opportunity and means of progress out of all that happens in the course of the life and the sadhana. There is a higher secret Will transcendent behind the play and will of the cosmic forces—a play which is always a mixture of things favourable and things adverse—and it is that Will which one must wait upon and have faith in; but you must not expect to be able always to understand its workings. The mind wants this or that to be done, the line once taken to be maintained, but what the mind wants is not at all always what is intended in a larger purpose. One has to follow indeed a fixed central aim in the sadhana without deviating from it, but not to build on outward circumstances, conditions, etc., as if they were fundamental things.

9-12-1932

SECTION THIRTEEN

**SADHANA IN THE ASHRAM
AND OUTSIDE**

Object of Creating the Ashram

THIS Ashram has been created with another object than that ordinarily common to such institutions, not for the renunciation of the world but as a centre and a field of practice for the evolution of another kind and form of life which would in the final end be moved by a higher spiritual consciousness and embody a greater life of the spirit. There is no general rule as to the stage at which one may leave the ordinary life and enter here; in each case it depends on the personal need and impulsion and the possibility or the advisability for one to take the step.

Types of Sadhaks and the Problem of Transformation

It is necessary or rather inevitable that in an Ashram which is a "laboratory", as A puts it, for a spiritual and supramental Yoga, humanity

should be variously represented. For the problem of transformation has to deal with all sorts of elements favourable and unfavourable. The same man indeed carries in him a mixture of these two things. If only sattwic and cultured men come for Yoga, men without very much of the vital difficulty in them, then, because the difficulty of the vital element in terrestrial nature has not been faced and overcome, it might well be that the endeavour would fail. There might conceivably be under certain circumstances an overmental layer superimposed on the mental, vital and physical, and influencing them, but hardly anything supramental or a sovereign transmutation of the human being. Those in the Ashram come from all quarters and are of all kinds; it cannot be otherwise.

In the course of the Yoga, collectively—though not for each one necessarily—as each plane is dealt with, all its difficulties arise. That will explain much in the Ashram that people do not expect there. When the preliminary work is over in the “laboratory”, things must change.

Also, much stress has not been laid on human fellowship of the ordinary kind between the inmates (though good feeling, consideration and courtesy should always be there), because that is not the aim; it is unity in a new consciousness that is the

SADHANA IN THE ASHRAM AND OUTSIDE

aim, and the first thing is for each to do his sadhana, to arrive at that new consciousness and realise oneness there.

Whatever faults are there in the sadhaks must be removed by the Light from above—a sattwic rule can only change natures predisposed to a sattwic rule.

31-10-1935

Flexibility and Variety in the Ashram Discipline

(1)

A HUMAN soul and nature cannot be dealt with by a set of mental rules applicable to everybody in the same way; if it were so, there would be no need of a Guru, each could set his chart of Yogic rules before him like the rules of Sandow's exercise and follow them till he became the perfect siddha!

25-10-1932

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(2)

The general principle of self-consecration and self-giving is the same for all in this Yoga, but each has his own way of consecration and self-giving. The way that X takes is good for X, just as the way that you take is the right one for you, because it is in consonance with your nature. If there were not this plasticity and variety, if all had to be cut in the same pattern, Yoga would be a rigid mental machinery, not a living power.

When you can sing out of your inner consciousness in which you feel the Mother moving all your actions, there is no reason why you should not do it. The development of capacities is not only permissible but right, when it can be made part of the Yoga; one can give not only one's soul, but all one's powers to the Divine.

29-6-1931

(3)

It is a little difficult for the wider spiritual outlook to answer your question in the way you want and every mental being wants, with a trenchant "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not"—especially when the

SADHANA IN THE ASHRAM AND OUTSIDE

“thou” is meant to cover “all”. For while there is an identity of essential aim, while there are general broad lines of endeavour, yet there is not in detail one common set of rules in inner things that can apply to all seekers. You ask: “Is not such and such a thing harmful?” But what is harmful to one may be helpful to another, what is helpful at a certain stage may cease to be helpful at another, what is harmful under certain conditions may be helpful under other conditions, what is done in a certain spirit may be disastrous, the same thing done in a quite different spirit would be innocuous or even beneficial.... there are so many things to be considered: the spirit, the circumstances, the person, the need and cast of the nature, the stage. That is why it is said so often that the Guru must deal with each disciple according to his separate nature and accordingly guide his sadhana; even if it is the same line of sadhana for all, yet at every point for each it differs. That also is the reason why we say that the divine way cannot be understood by the mind, because the mind acts according to hard and fast rules and standards, while the spirit sees the truth of all and the truth of each and acts variously according to its own comprehensive and complex vision. That also is why we say that no one can understand by his personal mental judgment the

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Mother's actions and reasons for action: it can only be understood by entering into the larger consciousness from which she sees things and acts upon them. That is baffling to the mind because it uses its small measures, but that is the truth of the matter.

So you will see that here there is no mental rule, but in each case the guidance is determined by spiritual reasons which are of a flexible character. There is no other consideration, no rule. Music, painting, poetry and many other activities which are of the mind and vital can be used as part of spiritual development or of the work and for a spiritual purpose: it depends on the spirit in which they are done.

Aim of the Ashram Work

(1)

THIS is not an Ashram like others—the members are not Sannyasis; it is not *moksha* that is the sole aim of the Yoga here. What is being done here is a preparation for a work—a work which will be founded on Yogic consciousness and Yoga-Shakti, and can

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have no other foundation. Meanwhile, every member here is expected to do some work in the Ashram as part of his spiritual preparation.

(2)

Work can be of two kinds—the work that is a field of experience used for the sadhana, for a progressive harmonisation and transformation of the being and its activities, and work that is a realised expression of the Divine. But the time for the latter can be only when the Realisation has been fully brought down to the earth-consciousness; till then all work whether done in the Ashram or without it, must be of the former kind.

17-3-1932

Basic Consciousness of Karmayoga

WHAT you received and kept in the work is indeed the true basic consciousness of Karmayoga—the calm consciousness from above supporting and the strength from above doing the work, with that the Bhakti which feels it to be the Mother's conscious-

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ness present and working. You know now by experience what is the secret of Karmayoga.

15-9-1936

Work for the Mother

WORK for the Mother done with the right concentration on her is as much a sadhana as meditation and inner experiences.

Openness to the Mother

To be open is simply to be so turned to the Mother that her Force can work in you without anything refusing or obstructing her action. If the mind is shut up in its own ideas and refuses to allow her to bring in the Light and the Truth, if the vital clings to its desires and does not admit the true initiative and impulses that the Mother's power brings, if the physical is shut up in its desire habits and inertia and does not allow the Light and Force to enter in it and work, then one is not open. It is not possible

SADHANA IN THE ASHRAM AND OUTSIDE

to be entirely open all at once in all the movements, but there must be a central opening in each part and a dominant aspiration or will in each part (not in the mind alone) to admit only the Mother's 'workings', the rest will then be progressively done.

28-10-1934

True Attitude in Work

THIS happens when the work is always associated with the Mother's thought, done as an offering to her, with the call to do it through you. All ideas of ego, all association of egoistic feelings with the work must disappear. One begins to feel the Mother's force doing the work; the psychic grows through a certain inner attitude behind the work and the adhar becomes open both to the psychic intuitions and influences from within and to the descent from above. Then the result of meditation can come through the work itself.

5-5-1936

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True Movement in Sadhana

WHAT do you call meditation? Shutting the eyes and concentrating? It is only one method for calling down the true consciousness. To join with the true consciousness or feel its descent is the only thing important and if it comes without the orthodox method, as it always did with me, so much the better. Meditation is only a means or device, the true movement is when even walking, working or speaking, one is still in sadhana.

10-6-1933

Sadhana through Work

(1)

To work in calm, ever-widening consciousness is at once a Sadhana and Siddhi.

26-5-1937

SADHANA IN THE ASHRAM AND OUTSIDE

(2)

Why argue from your personal experience, great or little, and turn it into a generalisation? A great many people (the majority perhaps) find it (sadhana through work) the easiest of all. Many find it easy to think of the Mother when working; but when they read or write, their mind goes off to the thing read or written and they forget everything else. I think that is the case with most. Physical work, on the other hand, can be done with the most external part of the mind, leaving the rest free to remember or to experience,

Consciousness in Physical Things

It is very true that physical things have a consciousness within them which feels and responds to care and is sensitive to careless touch and rough handling. To know or feel that and learn to be careful of them is a great progress of consciousness.

16-4-1936

Sports in the Ashram

CERTAINLY, we do not want only sportsmen in the Ashram: that would make it not an Ashram but a playground. The sports and physical exercises are primarily for the children of the school and they also do not play only but have to attend to their studies as well. Secondarily, the younger sadhaks are allowed, not enjoined or even recommended, to join in these sports, but certainly they are not supposed to be sportsmen only: they have other and more important things to do. To be a sportsman must necessarily be a voluntary choice and depends on one having the taste and inclination. There are plenty of people who would never dream of engaging in sports and the Mother also would never think of asking them to do so. Some, of course, might ask why any sports at all in an Ashram which ought to be concerned only with meditation and inner experiences and the escape from life into the Brahman. But that applies only to the ordinary kind of Ashram to which we have got accustomed and this is not that orthodox kind of Ashram. It includes life in Yoga, and once we admit life we can include anything that we find useful for life's ultimate and immediate purpose and not inconsistent with the works of the Spirit. After all, the

SADHANA IN THE ASHRAM AND OUTSIDE

orthodox Ashram came into being only after Brahman began to shun all connection with the world and the shadow of Buddhism stalked over all the land and the Ashrams turned into monasteries. The old Ashrams were not entirely like that; the boys and young men who were brought up in them were trained in many things belonging to life; the son of Pururavas and Urvashie practised archery in the Ashram of a Rishi and became an expert bowman and Karna became disciple of a great sage in order to acquire from him the use of powerful weapons. So there is no *à priori* ground why sports should be excluded from the life of an Ashram like ours where we are trying to equate life with the Spirit.

Propaganda for the Ashram

I DON'T believe in advertisement except for books etc. and in propaganda except for politics and patent medicines. But for serious work it is a poison. It means either a stunt or a boom—and stunts and booms exhaust the thing they carry on their crest and leave it lifeless and broken high and dry on the shores of nowhere—or it means a movement. A movement in the case of a work like mine means

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the founding of a school or a sect or some other nonsense. It means that hundreds or thousands of useless people join in and corrupt the work or reduce it to a pompous farce from which the Truth that was coming down recedes into secrecy and silence. It is what has happened to the "religions" and is the reason of their failure. If I tolerate a little writing about myself, it is only to have a sufficient counter-weight in that amorphous chaos, the public mind, to balance the hostility that is always aroused by the presence of a new dynamic Truth in this world of Ignorance. But the utility ends there and too much advertisement would defeat that object. I am perfectly "rational", I assure you, in my methods and I do not proceed merely on any personal dislike of fame. If and so far as publicity serves the Truth, I am quite ready to tolerate it; but I do not find publicity for its own sake desirable.

This "contemporary philosophy", British or Indian, looks to me very much like book-making and, though the "vulgarisation" of knowledge—to use the French term—by book-making has its use, I prefer to do solid work and leave that to others. You may say that I can write a solid thing in philosophy and let it be book-made. But even the solid tends to look shoddy in such surroundings. And

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besides, my solid work at present is not philosophy but something less wordy and more to the point. If that work gets done, then it will propagate itself so far as propagation is necessary—if it were not to get done, propagation would be useless.

The Propagandist Spirit

WELL-KNOWN or unknown has absolutely no importance from the spiritual point of view. It is simply the propagandist spirit. We are not a party or a church or religion seeking adherents or proselytes. One man who earnestly pursues the Yoga is of more value than a thousand well-known men.

16-1-1935

The first Necessity

To concentrate most on one's own spiritual growth and experience is the first necessity of the sadhak—to be eager to help others draws away from the inner work. To grow in the spirit is the greatest help one

can give to others, for then something flows out naturally to those around that helps them.

9-4-1937

Abandoning the Ordinary Life for Yoga

(1)

EVERYTHING depends upon the aim you put before you. If, for the realisation of one's spiritual aim, it is necessary to give up the ordinary life of the Ignorance (samsara), it must be done; the claim of the ordinary life cannot stand against that of the spirit.

If a Yoga of works alone is chosen as the path, then one may remain in the samsara, but it will be freely, as a field of action and not from any sense of obligation; for the Yogin must be free inwardly from all ties and attachments. On the other hand, there is no necessity to live the family life—one can leave it and take any kind of works as a field of action.

In the Yoga practised here the aim is to rise to a higher consciousness and to live out of the higher consciousness alone, not with the ordinary motives.

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This means a change of life as well as a change of consciousness. But all are not so circumstanced that they can cut loose from the ordinary life; they accept it therefore as a field of experience and self-training in the earlier stages of the sadhana. But they must take care to look at it as a field of experience only and to get free from the ordinary desires, attachments and ideas which usually go with it; otherwise, it becomes a drag and hindrance on their sadhana. When one is not compelled by circumstances there is no necessity to continue the ordinary life.

One becomes tamasic by leaving the ordinary actions and life, only if the vital is so accustomed to draw its motives of energy from the ordinary consciousness and its desires and activities that if it loses them, it loses all joy and charm and energy of existence. But if one has a spiritual aim and an inner life and the vital part accepts them, then it draws its energies from within and there is no danger of one's being tamasic.

6-6-1935

(2)

It is not absolutely necessary to abandon the ordinary life in order to seek after the Light or to

practise Yoga. This is usually done by those who want to make a clean cut, to live a purely religious or exclusively inner and spiritual life, to renounce the world entirely and to depart from the cosmic existence by cessation of the human birth and passing away into some higher state or into the transcendental Reality. Otherwise, it is only necessary when the pressure of the inner urge becomes so great that the pursuit of the ordinary life is no longer compatible with the pursuit of the dominant spiritual objective. Till then what is necessary is a power to practise an inner isolation, to be able to retire within oneself and concentrate at any time on the necessary spiritual purpose. There must also be a power to deal with the ordinary outer life from a new inner attitude and one can then make the happenings of that life itself a means for the inner change of nature and the growth in spiritual experience.

Necessity of Sadhana in the Ashram

It is certainly quite true that the psychic contact can exist at a distance and that the Divine is not limited by place, but is everywhere. It is not necessary for everybody to be in the Ashram or physically near to

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the Mother in order to live the spiritual life or to practise the Yoga, especially in its early stages. But it is only one side of the truth; there is another, otherwise the logical conclusion might be that there was no necessity for the Mother to be here at all, or for the existence of the Ashram, or for anyone to come here.

The psychic being is there in all, but in very few it is well developed, well built up in the consciousness or prominent in the front; in most it is veiled, often ineffective or only an influence, not conscious enough or strong enough to support the spiritual life.

It is for this reason that it is necessary for those drawn towards this truth to come here in order that they may receive the touch which will bring about or prepare the awakening of the psychic being,—that is for them the beginning of the effective psychic contact.

It is also for this reason that a stay here is needed for many,—if they are ready—in order that under the direct influence and nearness they may have the development or building up of the psychic being in the consciousness or its coming to the front. When the touch has been given or the development effected, so far as the sadhak is at the moment capable of it, he returns to the outside world and under the protection and guidance even at a distance is able

to keep the contact and go on with the spiritual life. But the influences of the outside world are not favourable to the psychic contact and the psychic development and if the sadhak is not sufficiently careful or concentrated, the psychic contact may easily be lost after a time or get covered over and the development may become retarded, stationary or even diminished by adverse movements or influences. It is therefore that the necessity exists and is often felt of return to the place of the central influence in order to fortify or recover the contact or to restore or to give a fresh forward impulse to the development. The aspiration for such nearness from time to time is not a vital desire; it becomes a vital desire only when it is egoistically insistent on or mixed with a vital motive, but not if it is an aspiration of the psychic being calm, deep and without clamour in it or perturbing insistence.

This for those who are not called upon or are not yet called upon to live in this Ashram under the direct pressure of the central force and presence. Those who must so live are those called from the very beginning or who have become ready or who are for some reason or another given a chance to form a part of the work or creation which is being prepared by Yoga. For them the stay here in the atmosphere, the nearness is indispensable; to depart

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would be for them a renunciation of the opportunity given them, a turning of the back upon the spiritual destiny. Their difficulties are in appearance greater than the struggle of those who remain outside because the demand and the pressure are greater; but also is their opportunity greater and the power and the influence for the development poured upon them and that too which they can spiritually become and will become if they are faithful to the choice and the call.

Action of Spiritual Force at a Distance

LEAVE aside the question of Divine or undivine, no spiritual man who acts dynamically is limited to physical contact—the idea that physical contact through writing, speech, meeting is indispensable to the action of the spiritual force is self-contradictory, for then it would not be a spiritual force. The spirit is not limited by physical things or by the body. If you have the spiritual force, it can act on people thousands of miles away who do not know and never will know that you are acting on them or that they are being acted upon—they only know that there is a force enabling them to do things and may very well suppose it is their own great energy and genius.

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Sadhana Outside Ashram

(1)

It is quite possible for you to do sadhana at home and in the midst of your work—many do so. What is necessary at the beginning is to remember the Mother as much as possible, to concentrate on her in the heart for a time every day, if possible thinking of her as the Divine Mother, to aspire to feel her there within you, offer her your works and pray that from within she may guide and sustain you. This is a preliminary stage which often takes long, but if one goes through it with sincerity and steadfastness, the mentality begins little by little to change and a new consciousness opens in the sadhak which begins to be aware more and more of the Mother's presence within, of her working in the nature and in the life or of some other spiritual experience which opens the gate towards realisation.

22-2-1937

(2)

When one is living in the world, one cannot do as in an Ashram—one has to mix with others and keep

SADHANA IN THE ASHRAM AND OUTSIDE

up outwardly at least ordinary relations with others. The important thing is to keep the inner consciousness open to the Divine and grow in it. As one does that, more or less rapidly according to the inner intensity of the sadhana, the attitude towards others will change. All will be seen more and more in the Divine and the feelings, actions, etc. will more and more be determined, not only by the old external reactions, but by the growing consciousness within you.

14-9-1934

(3)

“Dedication of life” is quite possible for some without their staying here. It is a question of inward attitude and of the total consecration of the being to the Divine. •

28-6-1936

Peace in Worldly Life

PEACE is never easy to get in the life of the world and never constant, unless one lives deep within

and bears the external activities as only a surface front of being.

13-9-1936

Spiritual Destiny and Outer Circumstances

WHEN someone is destined for the Path, all circumstances through all the deviations of mind and life help in one way or another to lead him to it. It is his own psychic being within him and Divine Power above that use to that end the vicissitudes both of mind and outward circumstance.

8-10-1936

Destiny in Yoga

DESTINY in the rigid sense applies only to the outer being so long as it lives in the Ignorance. What we call destiny is only in fact the result of the present condition of the being and the nature and energies it has accumulated in the past acting on each other and determining the present attempts

and their future results. But as soon as one enters the path of spiritual life, this old predetermined destiny begins to recede. There comes in a new factor, the Divine Grace, the help of a higher Divine Force other than the force of Karma, which can lift the sadhak beyond the present possibilities of his nature. One's spiritual destiny is then the divine election which ensures the future. The only doubt is about the vicissitudes of the path and the time to be taken by the passage. It is here that the hostile forces playing on the weaknesses of the past nature strive to prevent the rapidity of the progress and to postpone the fulfilment. Those who fall, fall not because of the attacks of the vital forces, but because they put themselves on the side of the hostile Force and prefer a vital ambition or desire (ambition, vanity, lust, etc.) to the spiritual siddhi.

16-6-1933

The Past and the Future

THE past has not to be kept,—one has to go into the future realisation. All that is necessary in the

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past for the future will be taken up and given a new form.

10-1-1935

Spiritual Opportunity

A SPIRITUAL opportunity is not a thing that should be lightly thrown away with the idea that it will be all right some other time—one cannot be so sure of the other time. Besides, these things leave a mark and at the place of the mark there can be a recurrence.

SECTION FOURTEEN

AVATARHOOD AND EVOLUTION

Connection of Avatarhood with Evolution

(1)

AVATARHOOD would have little meaning if it were not connected with the evolution. The Hindu procession of the ten Avatars is itself, as it were, a parable of evolution. First the Fish Avatar, then the amphibious animal between land and water, then the land animal, then the Man-Lion Avatar, bridging man and animal, then man as dwarf, small and undeveloped and physical but containing in himself the godhead and taking possession of existence, then the rajasic, sattwic, nirguna Avatars, leading the human development from the vital rajasic to the sattwic mental man and again the overmental superman. Krishna, Buddha and Kalki depict the last three stages, the stages of the spiritual development—Krishna opens the possibility of Overmind, Buddha tries to shoot beyond to the supreme liberation but that liberation is still negative, not returning upon earth to complete positively the evolution; Kalki is to correct this by bringing

the Kingdom of the Divine upon earth, destroying the opposing Asura forces. The progression is striking and unmistakable.

As for the lives in between the Avatar lives, it must be remembered that Krishna speaks of many lives in the past, not only a few supreme ones, and secondly that while he speaks of himself as the Divine, in one passage he describes himself as a Vibhuti, *vrishninam vasudevah*. We may therefore fairly assume that in many lives he manifested as the Vibhuti veiling the fuller Divine Consciousness. If we admit that the object of Avatarhood is to lead the evolution, this is quite reasonable, the Divine appearing as Avatar in the great transitional stages and as Vibhutis to aid the lesser transitions.

(2)

I only took the Puranic list of Avatars and interpreted it as a parable of evolution, so as to show that the idea of evolution is implicit behind the theory of Avatarhood. As to whether one accepts Buddha as an Avatar or prefers to put others in his place (in some lists Balaram replaces Buddha), is a matter of individual feeling. The Buddhist Jatakas are legends about the past incarnations of the Buddha, often with a teaching implied in them,

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and are not a part of the Hindu system. To the Buddhists Buddha was not an Avatar at all, he was the soul climbing up the ladder of spiritual evolution till it reached the final stage of emancipation—although Hindu influence did make Buddhism develop the idea of an eternal Buddha above, that was not a universal or fundamental Buddhistic idea. Whether the Divine in manifesting his Avatarhood could choose to follow the line of evolution from the lowest scale, manifesting on each scale as a Vibhuti is a question again to which the answer is not inevitably in the negative. If we accept the evolutionary idea, such a thing may have its place. . If Buddha taught something different from Krishna, that does not prevent his advent from being necessary in the spiritual evolution. The only question is whether the attempt to scale the heights of an absolute Nirvana through negation of cosmic existence was a necessary step or not, having a view to the fact that one can make the attempt to reach the Highest on the *neti neti* as well as the *iti iti* line.

30-7-1936

(3)

Too much importance need not be attached to the details about Kalki—they are rather symbolic than an attempt to prophesy details of future history. What is expressed is something that has to come, but it is symbolically indicated, no more.

So too, too much weight need not be put on the exact figures about the Yugas in the Purana. Here again, the Kala and the Yugas indicate successive periods in the cyclic wheel of evolution,—the perfect state, decline and disintegration of successive ages of humanity followed by a new birth—the mathematical calculations are not the important element. The argument of the end of the Kali Yuga already come or coming and a new Satya Yuga coming is a very familiar one and there have been many who have upheld it.

14-7-1936

Two Sides of Avatarhood

THERE are two sides of the phenomenon of Avatarhood, the Divine Consciousness and the instrumental personality in Nature under the conditions

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of Nature which it uses according to the rules of the game. If Avatarhood is only a flashing miracle then I have no use for it. If it is a coherent part of the arrangement of the Omnipotent Divine in Nature, then I can understand and accept it.

Double Element in the Divine Descent

As for the Divine and the human, that also is a mind-made difficulty. The Divine is there in the human, and the human fulfilling and exceeding its highest aspirations and tendencies becomes the Divine. That is what your depression could not understand—that when the Divine descends, he takes upon himself the burden of humanity in order to exceed it—he becomes human in order to show humanity how to become Divine. But that cannot be if there is only a weakling without any divine Presence within or divine Force behind him—he has to be strong in order to put his strength into all who are willing to receive it. There is therefore in him a double element—human in front, Divine behind—and it is that which gives the impression of unfathomableness of which you complained. If you look upon the human alone, looking with the

external eye only and not willing or ready to see anything else, you will see a human being only—if you look for the Divine, you will find the Divine.

Human Ideas of Divine Manifestation

MEN's way of doing things well is through a clear mental connection; they see things and do things with the mind and what they want is a mental and human perfection. When they think of a manifestation of Divinity, they think it must be an extraordinary perfection in doing ordinary human things—an extraordinary business faculty, political, poetic or artistic faculty, an accurate memory, not making mistakes, not undergoing any defeat or failure. Or else, they think of things which they call superhuman like not eating food or telling cotton-futures or sleeping on nails or eating them. All that has nothing to do with manifesting the Divine.... These human ideas are false.

The Divinity acts according to another consciousness, the consciousness of the Truth above and the Lila below and It acts according to the need of the Lila, not according to men's ideas of what It should or should not do. This is the first thing one must

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grasp, otherwise one can understand nothing about the manifestation of the Divine.

18-5-1934

Omnipotence and Self-limitation of the Divine

IF the Divine were not in essence omnipotent, he could not be omnipotent anywhere—whether in the supramental or anywhere else. Because he chooses to limit or determine his action by conditions, it does not make him less omnipotent. His self-limitation is itself an act of omnipotence. . . .

Why should the Divine be tied down to succeed in all his operations? What if failure suits him better and serves better the ultimate purpose? What rigid primitive notions are these about the Divine!

Certain conditions have been established for the game and so long as those conditions remain unchanged certain things are not done, so we say they are impossible, can't be done. If the conditions are changed then the same things are done or at least become licit—allowable, legal according to the so-called laws of Nature, and then we say they can

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be done. The Divine also acts according to the conditions of the game. He may change them, but he has to change them first, not proceed, while maintaining the conditions, to act by a series of miracles.

The heart has its intuitions as well as the mind and these are as true as any mental perceptions. But neither all feelings nor all perceptions nor all rational conclusions can be true.

February, 1935

Purpose of the Avatar

I HAVE said that the Avatar is one who comes to open the Way for humanity to a higher consciousness—if nobody can follow the Way, then either our conception of the thing, which is also that of Christ and Krishna and Buddha also, is all wrong or the whole life and action of the Avatar is quite futile. It seems to say that there is no way and no possibility of following, that the struggles and sufferings of the Avatar are unreal and all humbug,—there is no possibility of struggle for one who represents the Divine. Such a conception makes nonsense of the whole idea of Avatarhood; there is then no reason in it, no neces-

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sity in it, no meaning in it. The Divine being all-powerful can lift people up without bothering to come down on earth. It is only if it is a part of the world-arrangement that he should take upon himself the burden of humanity and open the Way that Avatarhood has any meaning.

7-3-1935

Work of the Avatar

IF the Avatars are shams, they have no value for others nor any true effect, Avatarhood becomes perfectly irrational and unreal and meaningless. The Divine does not need to suffer or struggle for himself; if he takes on these things, it is in order to bear the world-burden and the world and men; and if the sufferings and struggles are to be of any help, they must be real. A sham or falsehood cannot help—they must be as real as the struggles and sufferings of men themselves—the Divine bears them and at the same time shows the way out of them. Otherwise, his assumption of human nature has no meaning and no utility and no value. What is the use of admitting Avatarhood if you take all the meaning out of

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it?....The manifestation of the Divine in the Avatar is of help to man because it helps him to discover his own divinity and find the way to realise it. If the difference is so great that the humanity by its very nature prevents all possibility of following the Way opened by the Avatar, it merely means that there is no divinity in man that can respond to the Divinity in the Avatar.

I repeat, the Divine when he takes on the burden of terrestrial nature takes it fully, sincerely and without any conjuring tricks or pretence. If he has something behind him which emerges always out of the coverings, it is the same thing in essence, even if greater in degree, that is behind others, and it is to awaken that that he is there....

The psychic being does the same for all who are intended for the spiritual way; men need not be extraordinary beings to follow it. That is the mistake you are making, to harp on greatness as if only the great can be spiritual....

If absolute surrender, faith, etc. from the beginning were essential for Yoga, then nobody could do it. I myself could not have done it if such a condition had been demanded of me....

8-3-1935

AVATARHOOD AND EVOLUTION

The Descending Power

THE Descending Power (Avatar) chooses its own place, body, time for the manifestation.

17-9-1934

Rama and Avatarhood

(I)

I AM rather perplexed by your strictures on Rama. Cowardice is the last thing that can be charged against Valmiki's Rama; he has always been considered as a warrior and it is the "martial races" of India who have made him their god. Valmiki everywhere paints him as a great warrior. His employment of ruse against an infrahuman enemy does not prove the opposite—for that is always how the human (even great warriors and hunters) has dealt with the infrahuman. I think it is Madhusudan who has darkened Valmiki's hero in Bengali eyes and turned him into a poor puppet, but that is not the authentic Rama who, say what one will, was a great epic figure,—Avatar or no Avatar. As for conventional morality, all morality is a convention

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—man cannot live without conventions, mental and moral, otherwise he feels himself lost in the rolling sea of the anarchic forces of the vital Nature. Even the Russells and Bernard Shaws can only end by setting up another set of conventions in the place of those they have skittled over. Only by rising above mind can one really get beyond conventions—Krishna was able to do it because he was not a mental human being but an over-mental godhead acting freely out of a greater consciousness than man's. Rama was not that, he was the Avatar of the sattwic mind—mental, emotional, moral—and he followed the Dharma of the age and race. That may make him temperamentally congenial to Gandhi and the reverse to you; but just as Gandhi's temperamental recoil from Krishna does not prove Krishna to be no Avatar, so your temperamental recoil from Rama does not establish that he was not an Avatar. However, my main point will be that Avatarhood does not depend upon these questions at all, but has another basis, meaning and purpose.

(2)

I have no intention of entering into a supreme defence of Rama—I only entered into the points

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about Bali etc. because these are usually employed nowadays to belittle him as a great personality on the usual level. But from the point of view of Avatarhood I would no more think of defending his moral perfection according to modern standards than I would think of defending Napoleon or Caesar against the moralists or the democratic critics or the debunkers in order to prove that they were Vibhutis. Vibhuti, Avatar are terms which have their own meaning and scope, and they are not concerned with morality or immorality, perfection or imperfection according to small human standards or setting an example to men or showing new moral attitudes or giving new spiritual teachings. These may or may not be done, but they are not at all the essence of the matter.

Also, I do not consider your method of dealing with the human personality of Rama to be the right one. It has to be taken as a whole in the setting that Valmiki gave it (not treated as if it were the story of a modern man) and with the significance that he gave to his hero's personality, deeds and works. If it is pulled out of its setting and analysed under the dissecting knife of a modern ethical mind, it loses all its significance at once. Krishna so treated becomes a debauchee and trickster who no doubt did great things in politics

—but so did Rama in war. Achilles and Odysseus pulled out of their setting become, one a furious egoistic savage, and the other a cruel and cunning savage. I consider myself under an obligation to enter into the spirit, significance, atmosphere of the Mahabharata, Iliad, Ramayana and identify myself with their time-spirit before I can feel what their heroes were in themselves apart from the details of their outer action.

As for the Avatarhood, I accept it for Rama because he fills a place in the scheme—and seems to me to fill it rightly—and because when I read the Ramayana I feel a great afflatus which I recognise and which makes of its story—mere faery-tale though it seems—a parable of a great critical transitional event that happened in the terrestrial evolution and gives to the main character's personality and action a significance of the large typical cosmic kind which these actions would not have had, if they had been done by another man in another scheme of events. The Avatar is not bound to do extraordinary actions, but he is bound to give his acts or his work or what he is—any of these or all—a significance and an effective power that are part of something essential to be done in the history of the earth and its races.

All the same, if anybody does not see as I do and

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wants to eject Rama from his place, I have no objection—I have no particular partiality for Rama—provided somebody is put in who can worthily fill up the gap his absence leaves. There was somebody there, Valmiki's Rama or another Rama or somebody not Rama.

Also, I do not mean that I admit the validity of your remarks about Rama, even taken as a piecemeal criticism, but that I have no time for it today. I maintain my position about the killing of Bali and the banishment of Sita in spite of Bali's preliminary objection to the procedure, afterwards retracted, and in spite of the opinion of Rama's relatives, necessarily from the point of view of the antique dharma—not from that of any universal moral standard—which besides does not exist, since the standard changes according to clime or age.

23-8-1934

(3)

No, certainly not—an Avatar is not at all bound to be a spiritual prophet—he is never in fact merely a prophet, he is a realiser, an establisher—not of outward things only, though he does realise some-

thing in the outward also, but, as I have said, of something essential and radical needed for the terrestrial evolution which is the evolution of the embodied spirit through successive stages towards the Divine. It was not at all Rama's business to establish the spiritual stage of that evolution—so he did not at all concern himself with that. His business was to destroy Ravana and to establish the Rama-rajya—in other words, to fix for the future the possibility of an order proper to the sattwic civilised human being who governs his life by the reason, the finer emotions, morality, or at least moral ideals, such as truth, obedience, co-operation and harmony, the sense of domestic and public order,—to establish this in a world still occupied by anarchic forces, the Animal mind and the powers of the vital Ego making its own satisfaction the rule of life, in other words, the Vanara and Rakshasa. This is the meaning of Rama and his life-work and it is according as he fulfilled it or not that he must be judged as Avatar or no Avatar. It was not his business to play the comedy of the chivalrous Kshatriya with the formidable brute beast that was Bali, it was his business to kill him and get the Animal mind under his control. It was his business to be not necessarily a perfect, but a largely representative sattwic Man, a faithful

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husband and a lover, a loving and obedient son, a tender and perfect brother, father, friend—he is friend of all kinds of people, friend of the outcast Guhaka, friend of the Animal leaders, Sugriva, Hanumana, friend of the vulture Jatayu, friend of even Rakshasa Vibhishana. All that he was in a brilliant, striking but above all spontaneous and inevitable way, not with forcing of this note or that like Harishchandra or Shivi, but with a certain harmonious completeness. But most of all, it was his business to typify and establish the things on which the social idea and its stability depend, truth and honour, the sense of Dharma, public spirit and the sense of order. To the first, to truth and honour, much more than to his filial love and obedience to his father—though to that also—he sacrificed his personal rights as the elect of the King and the assembly and fourteen of the best years of his life and went into exile in the forests. To his public spirit and his sense of public order (the great and supreme civic virtue in the eyes of the ancient Indians, Greeks, Romans, for at that time the maintenance of the ordered community, not the separate development and satisfaction of the individual was the pressing need of the human evolution) he sacrificed his own happiness and domestic life and the happiness of Sita. In that he was at one with the moral sense

of all the antique races, though at variance with the later romantic individualistic sentimental morality of the modern man who can afford to have that less stern morality just because the ancients sacrificed the individual in order to make the world safe for the spirit of social order. Finally, it was Rama's business to make the world safe for the ideal of the sattwic human being by destroying the sovereignty of Ravana, the Rakshasa menace. All this he did with such a divine afflatus in his personality and action that his figure has been stamped for more than two millenniums on the mind of Indian culture, and what he stood for has dominated the reason and idealising mind of man in all countries, and in spite of the constant revolt of the human vital, is likely to continue to do so until a greater ideal arises. And you say in spite of all these that he was no Avatar? If you like—but at any rate he stands among the few greatest Vibhutis. You may dethrone him now—for man is no longer satisfied with the sattwic ideal and is seeking for something more—but his work and meaning remains stamped on the past of the earth's evolving race. When I spoke of the gap that would be left by his absence, I did not mean a gap among the prophets and intellectuals, but a gap in the scheme of Avatarhood—there was somebody who was the Avatar of the sattwic Human as Krishna.

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was the Avatar of the overmental Superman—I can see no one but Rama who can fill the place. Spiritual teachers and prophets (as also intellectuals, scientists, artists, poets, etc.)—these are at the greatest Vibhutis but they are not Avatars. For at that rate all religious founders would be Avatars—Joseph Smith (I think that is his name) of the Mormons, St. Francis of Assisi, Calvin, Loyala and a host of others as well as Christ, Chaitanya or Ramakrishna.

For faith, miracles, Bijoy Goswami, another occasion. I wanted to say this much more about Rama—which is still only a hint and is not the thing I was going to write about the general principle of Avatarhood.

Nor, may I add, is it a complete or supreme defence of Rama. For that I would have to write about what the story of the Ramayana meant, appreciate Valmiki's presentation of his chief characters (they are none of them copy-book examples, but great men and women with the defects and merits of human nature, as all men even the greatest are), and show also how the Godhead, which has behind the frontal and instrumental personality we call Rama, worked out every incident of his life as a necessary step in what had to be done. As to the weeping Rama, I had answered that in my other unfinished letter. You are imposing the colder and

harder Nordic ideal on the southern temperament which regarded the expression of emotions, not its suppression, as a virtue. Witness the weeping and lamentations of Achilles, Ulysses and other great heroes, Persian and Indian—the latter especially as lovers.

24-8-1934

(4)

Why should not Rama have *kama* (lust) as well as *prema* (love) ? They were supposed to go together as between husband and wife in ancient India. The performances of Rama in the *viraha* of Sita are due to Valmiki's poetic idea which was also Kalidasa's and everybody else's in those far-off times about how a complete lover should behave in such a quandary. Whether the actual Rama bothered himself to do all that is another matter.

As for the unconscious Avatar, why not? Chaitanya is supposed to be an Avatar by the Vaishnavas, yet he was conscious of the Godhead behind only when that Godhead came in front and possessed him on rare occasions. Christ said, "I and my father are one," but yet he always spoke and behaved as if there were a difference. Ramakrishna's earlier period

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was that of one seeking God, not aware from the first of his identity. These are the reputed religious Avatars who ought to be more conscious than a man of action like Rama. And supposing the full and permanent consciousness, why should the Avatar proclaim himself except on rare occasions to an Arjuna or to a few bhaktas or disciples? It is for others to find out what he is; though he does not deny when others speak of him as That, he is not always saying and perhaps never may say or only in moments like that of the Gita, "I am He".

2-9-1934

(5)

No time for a full answer to your renewed remarks on Rama tonight. You are intrigued only because you stick to the modern standard, modern measuring-rods of moral and spiritual perfection (introduced by Seely and Bankim) for the Avatar—while I start from another standpoint altogether and resolutely refuse these standard human measures. The ancient Avatars except Buddha were not either standards of perfection or spiritual teachers in spite of the Gita which was spoken, says Krishna, in a moment of supernormal consciousness which he

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lost immediately afterwards. They were, if I may say so, representative cosmic men who were instruments of a divine Intervention for fixing certain things in the evolution of the earth-race. I stick to that and refuse to submit myself in this argument to any other standard whatever.

I did not admit that Rama was a blind Avatar, but offered you two alternatives of which the latter represents my real view founded on the impression made on me by the Ramayana that Rama knew very well but refused to be talkative about it—his business being not to disclose the Divine but to fix mental, moral and emotional man (not to originate him, for he was there already) on the earth as against the Animal and Rakshasa forces. My argument from Chaitanya (who was for most of the time to his outward consciousness first a pandit and then a bhakta, but only occasionally the Divine himself) is perfectly rational and logical, if you follow my line and don't insist on a high specifically spiritual consciousness for the Avatar. I shall point out what I mean in my next.

By sattwic man I do not mean a moral or an always self-controlled one, but a predominantly mental (as opposed to a vital or merely physical man) who has rajasic emotions and passions, but lives predominantly according to his mind and its

will and ideas. There is no such thing, I suppose, as a purely sattwic man—since the three gunas go always together in a state of unstable equilibrium—but a predominantly sattwic man is what I have described. My impression of Rama from Valmiki is such—it is quite different from yours. I am afraid your picture of him is quite out of focus—you efface the main lines of the character, belittle and brush out all the lights to which Valmiki gave so much value and prominence and hammer always at some details and some parts of shadow which you turn into the larger part of Rama. That is what the debunkers do—but a debunked figure is not the true figure.

By the way, a sattwic man can have a strong passion and strong anger—and when he lets the latter loose, the normally vicious fellow is simply nowhere. Witness the outbursts of anger of Christ, the indignation of Chaitanya—and the general evidence of experience and psychology on the point.

The trait of Rama which you give as that of an undeveloped man, viz., his decisive spontaneous action according to the will and the idea that came to him, is a trait of the cosmic man and many Vibhutis, men of action of the large Caesarian or Napoleonic type.

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When I said, "Why not an unconscious Avatar?" I was taking your statement (not mine) that Rama was unconscious and how could there be an unconscious Avatar. My own view is that Rama was not blind, not unconscious of his Avatarhood, only uncommunicative about it. But I said that even taking your statement to be correct, the objection was not insuperable. I instanced the case of Chaitanya and the others, because there the facts are hardly disputable. Chaitanya for the first part of his life was simply Nimai Pandit and had no consciousness of being anything else. Then he had his conversion and became the bhakta Chaitanya. This bhakta at times seemed to be possessed by the presence of Krishna, knew himself to be Krishna, spoke, moved and appeared with the light of the Godhead—none around him could think of or see him as anything else when he was in this glorified and transfigured condition. But from that he fell back to the ordinary consciousness of the bhakta and, as I have read in his biography, refused then to consider himself as anything more. These, I think, are the facts. Well, then what do they signify? Was he only Nimai Pandit at first? It is quite conceivable that he was so and the descent of the Godhead into him only took place after his conversion and spiritual change. But also afterwards when he was in his normal bhakta-

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consciousness, was he then no longer the Avatar? An intermittent Avatarhood? Krishna coming down for an afternoon call into Chaitanya and then going up again till the time came for the next visit? I find it difficult to believe in this phenomenon. The rational explanation is that in the phenomenon of Avatarhood there is a Consciousness behind, at first veiled or sometimes perhaps half-veiled, which is that of the Godhead and a frontal consciousness, human or apparently human or at any rate with all the appearance of terrestriality which is the instrumental personality. In that case, it is possible that the secret Consciousness was all along there, but waited to manifest until after the conversion and it manifested intermittently because the main work of Chaitanya was to establish the type of a spiritual and psychic bhakti and love in the emotional vital part of man, preparing the vital in us in that way to turn towards the Divine—at any rate, to fix that possibility in the earth-nature. It was not that there had not been the emotional type of bhakti before; but the completeness of it, the *élan*, the vital's rapture in it had never manifested as it manifested in Chaitanya. But for that work it would never have done if he had always been in the Krishna consciousness; he would have been the Lord to whom all gave bhakti, but not the supreme example of the divine ecstatic

bhakti. But still the occasional manifestation showed who he was and at the same time evidenced the mystic law of the Immanence.

Voilà—for Chaitanya. But, if Chaitanya, the frontal consciousness, the instrumental personality, was all the time the Avatar, yet except in his highest moments was unconscious of it and even denied it, that pushed a little farther would establish the possibility of what you call an unconscious Avatar, that is to say, of one in which the veiled consciousness might not come in front but always move the instrumental personality from behind. The frontal consciousness might be aware in the inner parts of its being that it was only an instrument of something Divine which was its real Self, but outwardly would think, speak and behave as if it were only the human being doing a given work with a peculiar power and splendour. Whether there was such an Avatar or not is another matter, but logically it is possible.

4-9-1934

(6)

The question was if certain perfections must not be demanded of the Divine Manifestation which seemed to me quite irrelevant to the reality. I put forward

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two propositions which appear to me indispensable unless we are to reverse all spiritual knowledge in favour of modern European ideas about things: first, the Divine Manifestation, even when it manifests in mental and human ways, has behind it a consciousness greater than the mind and not bound by the petty mental and moral conventions of this very ignorant human race—so that to impose these standards on the Divine is to try to do what is irrational and impossible.

Secondly, this Divine Consciousness behind the apparent personality is concerned with only two things in a fundamental way—the truth above and here below the Lila and the purpose of the incarnation or manifestation, and it does what is necessary for that in the way its greater than human consciousness sees to be the necessary and intended way. But I do not understand how all that can prevent me from answering mental questions. On my own showing, if it is necessary for the divine purpose, it has to be done. Sri Ramakrishna himself answered thousands of questions, I believe. But the answers must be such as he gave and such as I try to give, answers from a higher spiritual experience, from a deeper source of knowledge and not lucubrations of the logical intellect trying to co-ordinate its ignorance. Still less can there be a placing of a divine

truth before the judgments of the intellect to be condemned or acquitted by that authority—for the authority here has no sufficient jurisdiction or competence....

September, 1934

(7)

In Yoga we do not strive after greatness. It is not a question of Sri Krishna's disciples but of the earth-consciousness. Rama was a mental man, there is no touch of the Overmind consciousness (direct) in anything he said or did, but what he did was done with the greatness of the Avatar. But there have since been men who did live in touch with the planes above mind—higher mind, illumined mind, intuition. There is no question of asking whether they were greater than Rama, they might have been less great, but they were able to live from a new plane of consciousness. And Krishna's opening the Overmind certainly made it possible for the attempt at bringing Supermind to the earth to be made.

Rama spoke always from the thinking intelligence, the common property of developed men; Ramakrishna constantly from a swift and luminous spiritual intuition....

11-2-1935

SECTION FIFTEEN

PURPOSE AND PROCESS OF

DEATH & REBIRTH

Necessity of Death

DEATH is there because the being in the body is not yet developed enough to go on growing in the same body without the need of change and the body itself is not sufficiently conscious. If the mind and vital and the body itself were more conscious and plastic, death would not be necessary.

3-12-1933

Immortality of the Body

THERE can be no immortality of the body without supramentalisation; the potentiality is there in the Yogic force and Yogis can live for 200 or 300 years or more, but there can be no real principle of it without the Supramental.

Even Science believes that one day death may be conquered by physical means and its reasonings are perfectly sound. There is no reason why the

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Supramental Force should not do it. Forms on earth do not last (they do in other planes), because these forms are too rigid to grow expressing the progress of the spirit. If they become plastic enough to do that, there is no reason why they should not last.

March, 1935

Immunity from Death

IMMUNITY from death by anything but one's own will to leave the body, immunity from illness, are things that can be achieved only by a complete change of consciousness which each man has to develop in himself,—there can be no automatic immunity without that achievement.

The Evolving Soul and the Unborn Self

It is necessary to understand clearly the difference between the evolving soul (psychic being) and the pure Atman, self or spirit. The pure self is unborn, does not pass through death or birth, is independent

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of birth or body, mind or life or this manifested Nature. It is not bound by these things, not limited, not affected, even though it assumes and supports them. The soul, on the contrary, is something that comes down into birth and passes through death—although it does not itself die, for it is immortal—from one state to another, from the earth plane to other planes and back again to the earth-existence. It goes on with this progression from life to life through an evolution which leads it up to the human state and evolves through it all a being of itself which we call the psychic being that supports the evolution and develops a physical, a vital, a mental human consciousness as its instruments of world-experience and of a disguised, imperfect, but growing self-expression. All this it does from behind a veil showing something of its divine self only in so far as the imperfection of the instrumental being will allow it. But a time comes when it is able to prepare to come out from behind the veil, to take command and turn all the instrumental nature towards a divine fulfilment. This is the beginning of the true spiritual life. The soul is able now to make itself ready for a higher evolution of manifested consciousness than the mental human—it can pass from the mental to the spiritual and through degrees of the spiritual to the supramental state. Till then there is no reason

why it should cease from birth, it cannot in fact do so. If having reached the spiritual state, it wills to pass out of the terrestrial manifestation, it may indeed do so—but there is also possible a higher manifestation in the Knowledge and not in the Ignorance.

Your question therefore does not arise. It is not the naked spirit, but the psychic being that goes to the psychic plane to rest till it is called again to another life. There is, therefore, no need of a Force to compel it to take birth anew. It is in its nature something that is put forth from the Divine to support the evolution and it must do so till the Divine's purpose in its evolution is accomplished. Karma is only a machinery, it is not the fundamental cause of terrestrial existence—it cannot be, for when the soul first entered this existence, it had no Karma.

What again do you mean by “the all-veiling Maya” or by “losing all consciousness?” The soul cannot lose all consciousness, for its very nature is consciousness though not of the mental kind to which we give the name. The consciousness is merely covered, not lost or abolished by the so-called Inconscience of material Nature and then by the half-conscious ignorance of mind, life and body. It manifests, as the individual mind and life and body grow, as much as may be of the

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consciousness which it holds in potentiality, manifests it in the outward instrumental nature as far as and in the way that is possible through these instruments and through the outer personality that has been prepared for it and by it—for both are true—for the present life.

I know nothing about any terrible suffering endured by the soul in the process of rebirth; popular beliefs even when they have some foundation are seldom enlightened and accurate.

2-9-1936

Rebirth and Personality

THE being as it passes through the series of its lives takes on various kinds of personalities and passes through various types of experiences, but it does not carry these on to the next life, as a rule. It takes on a new mind, vital and body. The mental capacities, occupations, interests, idiosyncrasies of the past mind and vital are not taken over by the new mind and vital, except to the extent that is useful for the new life. One may have the power of poetic expression in one life, but in the next not

have any such power or any interest in poetry. On the other hand, tendencies suppressed or missed or imperfectly developed in one life may come out in the next. There would be therefore nothing surprising in the contrast which you noted. The essence of past experiences is kept by the psychic being but the forms of experience or of personality are not, except such as are needed for the new stage in the soul's progress.

The being in its long course of experience may permit for a time the search after sensual pleasure and afterwards discard it and turn to higher things. This can happen even in the course of a life-time, *a fortiori* in a second life where the old personalities would not be carried over.

22-7-1936

Role of the Central Being (Jivatman)

THE central being is the being which presides over the different births one after the other but is itself unborn, for it does not descend into the being but is above it—it holds together the mental, vital and physical being and all the various parts of the

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personality and it controls the life either through the mental being and the mental thought and will or through the psychic. If it does not exercise its control, then the consciousness is in great disorder and every part of the personality acts for itself so that there is no coherence in the thought, feelings or action.

Soul's Journey after Death

At the time of death the being goes out of the body through the head; it goes out in the subtle body and goes to different planes of existence for a short time until it has gone through certain experiences which are the result of its earthly existence. Afterwards it reaches the psychic world where it rests in a kind of sleep, until it is time for it to start a new life on earth. That is what happens usually—but there are some beings who are more developed and do not follow this course.

3-12-1933

*Memory of Past Lives—
Retrograde Movement of the Soul*

AFTER leaving the body, the soul, after certain experiences in other worlds, throws off its mental and vital personalities and goes into rest to assimilate the essence of its past and prepare for a new life. It is this preparation that determines the circumstances of the new birth and guides it in its constitution of a new personality and the choice of its materials.

The departed soul retains the memory of its past experiences only in their essence, not in their form of detail. It is only if the soul brings back some past personality or personalities as part of its present manifestation that it is likely to remember the details of the past life. Otherwise, it is only by Yogadrishi that the memory comes.

The Karana-purusha is what is called the central being by us, the Jiva. It stands above the play, supporting it always.

There may be what seem to be retrograde movements but these are only like zigzag movements, not a real falling back, but a return on something not worked out so as to go on better afterwards. The soul does not go back to animal condition; but a part of the vital personality may disjoin itself and

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join an animal birth to work out its animal propensities there.

There is no truth in the popular belief about the avaricious man becoming a serpent. These are popular romantic superstitions.

22-9-1935

Passage through Vital-World after Death

THERE is after death a period in which one passes through the vital world and lives there for a time. It is only the first part of this transit that can be dangerous or painful; in the rest one works out under certain surroundings, the remnant of the vital desires and instincts which one had in the body. As soon as one is tired of these and able to go beyond, the vital sheath is dropped and the soul after a time needed to get rid of some mental survivals passes into a state of rest in the psychic world and remains there till the next life on earth.

One can help departed souls by one's good will or by occult means, if one has the knowledge. The one thing that one should not do is to hold them back by sorrow for them or longing or by anything

else that would pull them nearer to earth or delay their journey to their place of rest.

31-10-1936

Hell and Heaven—Memory of Past Lives

THE movement of the psychic being dropping the outer sheaths on its way to the psychic plane is the normal movement. But there can be any number of variations; one can return from the vital plane and there are many cases of an almost immediate birth, sometimes even attended with a complete memory of the events of the past life.

Hell and Heaven are often imaginary states of the soul or rather of the vital which it constructs about it after its passing. What is meant by hell is a painful passage through the vital or lingering there, as for instance, in many cases of suicide where one remains surrounded by the forces of suffering and turmoil created by this unnatural and violent exit. There are, of course, also worlds of mind and vital worlds which are penetrated with joyful or dark experiences. One may pass through these as the result of things formed in the nature which create the neces-

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sary affinities, but the idea of reward or retribution is a crude and vulgar conception which is a mere popular error.

There is no rule of complete forgetfulness in the return of the soul to rebirth. There are, especially in childhood, many impressions of the past life which can be strong and vivid enough, but the materialising education and influence of the environments prevent their true nature from being recognised. There are even a great number of people who have definite recollections of a past life. But these things are discouraged by education and the atmosphere and cannot remain or develop; in most cases they are stifled out of existence. At the same time it must be noted that what the psychic being carries away with it and brings back is ordinarily the essence of the experiences it had in former lives, and not the details so that you cannot expect the same memory as one has of the present existence.

A soul can go straight to the psychic world but it depends on the state of consciousness at the time of departure. If the psychic is in front at the time, the immediate transition is quite possible. It does not depend on the acquisition of a mental and vital as well as a psychic immortality—those who have acquired that would rather have the power to move about in the different worlds and even act on the

physical world without being bound to it. On the whole, it may be said that there is no one rigid rule for these things, manifold variations are possible depending upon the consciousness, its energies, tendencies and formations, although there is a general framework and design into which all fit and take their place.

16-12-1934

*Position of the Psychic World—Psychic
Emanation—Time of Soul's Determination
of Future Birth and Entry into New Body*

1. THE psychic being stands behind mind, life and body, supporting them; so also the psychic world is not one world in the scale like the mental, vital or physical worlds, but stands behind all these and it is there that the souls evolving here retire for the time between life and life. If the psychic were only one principle in the rising order of body, life and mind on a par with the others and placed somewhere in the scale on the same footing as the others, it could not be the soul of all the rest, the divine element making the evolution of the others possible

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and using them as instruments for a growth through cosmic experience towards the Divine. So also the psychic world cannot be one among the other worlds to which the evolutionary being goes for supraphysical experience; it is a plane where it retires into itself for rest, for a spiritual assimilation of what it has experienced and for a replunging into its own fundamental consciousness and psychic nature.

2. For the few who go out of the Ignorance and enter into Nirvana, there is no question of their going straight up into higher worlds of manifestation. Nirvana or Moksha is a liberated condition of the being, not a world—it is a withdrawal from the worlds and the manifestation. The analogy of *Pitriyana* and *Devayana* can hardly be mentioned in this connection.

3. The condition of the souls that retire into the psychic world is entirely static; each withdraws into himself and is not interacting with the others. When they come out of their trance, they are ready to go down into a new life, but meanwhile they do not act upon the earth life. There are other beings, guardians of the psychic world, but they are concerned only with the psychic world itself and the return of the souls to reincarnation, not with the earth.

4. A being of a psychic world cannot get fused into the soul of a human being on earth. What happens in some cases is that a very advanced psychic being sometimes sends down an emanation which resides in a human being and prepares it until it is ready for the psychic being itself to enter into the life. This happens when some special work has to be done and the human vehicle prepared. Such a descent produces a remarkable change of a sudden character in the personality and the nature.

5. Usually, a soul follows continuously the same line of sex. If there are shiftings of sex, it is, as a rule, a matter of parts of the personality which are not central.

6. As regards the stage at which the soul returning for rebirth enters the new body no rule can be laid down, for the circumstances vary with the individual. Some psychic beings get into relation with the birth-environment and the parents from the time of conception and determine the preparation of the personality and future in the embryo, others join only at the time of delivery, others even later on in the life and in these cases it is some emanation of the psychic being which upholds the life. It should be noted that the conditions of the future birth are determined fundamentally not during the stay in the psychic world but at the time of death—

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the psychic being then chooses what it should work out in the next terrestrial appearance and the conditions arrange themselves accordingly.

Note that the idea of rebirth and the circumstances of the new life as a reward or punishment for *punya* or *papa* is a crude human idea of "justice" which is quite unphilosophical and unspiritual and distorts the true intention of life. Life here is an evolution and the soul grows by experience, working out by it this or that in the nature, and if there is suffering, it is for the purpose of that working out, not as a judgment inflicted by God or Cosmic Law on the errors or stumblings which are inevitable in the Ignorance.

9-7-1937

Jivanmukta's Return to Earth—Guardians of the Psychic World

It is difficult to give a positive answer to these questions, because no general rule can be laid down applicable to all. The mind makes rigid rules or one rigid rule, but the Manifestation is in reality very plastic and various and many-sided. My

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answers therefore must not be taken as exhaustive of the subject or complete.

1. He (the Jivanmukta) can go wherever his aim was fixed, into a state of Nirvana or one of the divine worlds and stay there or remain, wherever he may go, in contact with the earth-movement and return to it if his will is to help that movement.

This (going direct from the world of the soul's present highest achievement to a still higher world) is doubtful. If originally he is not a being of the evolution but of some higher world, he would go back to that world. If he wants to go higher, it is logical that he should return to the field of evolution so long as he has not evolved the consciousness proper to that higher plane. The orthodox idea that even the gods have to come to earth if they want salvation may be applied to this ascension also. If he is originally an evolutionary being (Ramakrishna's distinction of the Jivakoti and Ishwarakoti may be extended to this also), he must proceed by the evolutionary path to either the negative withdrawal through Nirvana or some positive divine fulfilment in the increasing manifestation of Sachchidananda.

As to the impossibility of return, that is a knotty question. A divine being can always return—as Ramakrishna said, the Ishwarakoti can at will

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ascend or descend the stair between Birth and Immortality. For the others, it is probable that they may rest for a relative infinity of time, *shashwatik samah*, if that is the will in them, but a return cannot be barred out unless they have reached their highest possible status.

No, that (return to the psychic world before a new birth) is part of the evolutionary line only, not obligatory for divine returns.

2. An advanced psychic being may mean here one who has arrived at the soul's freedom and is immersed in the Divine—immersed does not mean abolished. Such a being does not sleep in the psychic world, but may remain in his state of blissful immersion or come back for some purpose.

The word "descend" has various meanings according to the context—I used it here in the sense of the psychic being coming down into the human consciousness and body ready for it; that descent might be at the time of birth or before or it may come down later and occupy the personality it has prepared for itself. I do not quite understand what are these personalities from above—it is the psychic being itself that takes up a body.

3. No, the psychic being cannot take up more than one body. There is only one psychic being for each human being, but the beings of the higher planes

e.g., the Gods of the Overmind can manifest in more than one human body at a time by sending different emanations into different bodies. These would be called Vibhutis of these Devatas.

4. These (the Guardians of the psychic world) are not human souls nor is this an office to which they are appointed nor are they functionaries—these are beings of the psychic plane pursuing their own natural activity in that plane. My word “guardian” was simply a phrase meant to indicate by an image or metaphor the nature of their action.

July, 1937

*Psychic Being's Choice and Formation of
New Personality*

THE psychic being's choice at the time of death does not *work out* the next formation of personality; it *fixes* it. When it enters the psychic world, it begins to assimilate the essence of its experience and by that assimilation is formed the future psychic personality in accordance with the fixation already made. When this assimilation is over, it is ready for a new birth; but the less developed beings do not

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work out the whole thing for themselves, there are beings and forces of the higher world who have that work. Also, when it comes to birth, it is not sure that the forces of the physical world will not come across the working out of what it wanted—its own new instrumentation may not be strong enough for that purpose; for, there is the interaction of its own energies and the cosmic forces here. There may be frustration, diversion, a partial working out—many things may happen. All that is not a rigid machinery, it is a working out of complex forces. It may be added, however, that a developed psychic being is much more conscious in this transition and works out much of it itself. The time depends also on the development and on a certain rhythm of the being—for some there is practically immediate rebirth, for others it takes longer, for some it may take centuries; but here, again, once the psychic being is sufficiently developed, it is free to choose its own rhythm and its own intervals. The ordinary theories are too mechanical—and that is the case also with the idea of *punya* and *paapa* and their results in the next life. There are certainly results of the energies put forth in a past life, but not on that rather infantine principle. A good man's suffering in this life would be a proof according to the orthodox theory that he had been a very great villain in his past

life, a bad man's prospering would be a proof that he had been quite angelic in his last visit to earth and sown a large crop of virtues and meritorious actions to reap this bumper crop of good fortune. Too symmetrical to be true. The object of birth being growth by experience, whatever reactions come to past deeds must be for the being to learn and grow, not as lollipops for the good boys of the class (in the past) and canings for the bad ones. The real sanction for good and ill is not good fortune for the one and bad fortune for the other, but this that good leads us towards a higher nature which is eventually lifted above suffering, and ill pulls us towards the lower nature which remains always in the circle of suffering and evil.

30-7-1937

*Return from Higher Worlds and
Liberation from Cosmic Existence*

It is quite possible that the sloka refers to a going up into higher worlds of felicity and light and this can be called a liberation or release. In later times the idea was strong that from all these higher worlds

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return is inevitable and it is only the release from all cosmic existence that gives *mukti*. The Vedic Rishis seem to have looked to an ascent into a luminous world or state above the falsehood and ignorance. In the Upanishad the sun is the symbol of the supramental Truth and it is said that those who pass into it may return but those who pass through the gates of the sun itself do not; possibly this means that an ascent into the Supermind itself above the golden lid of Overmind was the definitive liberation. The Veda speaks of the Truth hidden by a Truth where the Sun looses his horses from his car and there all the myriad rays are drawn together into one and that was considered the goal. The Isha Upanishad also speaks of the golden lid hiding the face of the Truth by removing which the Law of the Truth is seen, and the highest knowledge in which the one Purusha is known (*so'hamasmi*) is described as the '*kalyanatama*' form of the Sun. All this seems to refer to the supramental states of which the Sun is the symbol.

10-7-1937

*Transmigration into Animal Body—
Memory of Past Lives*

THESE words do not necessarily refer to the animal birth, but it is true that there has been a general belief of that kind not only in India but wherever “transmigration” or “metempsychosis” was believed in. Shakespeare is referring to Pythagoras’s belief in transmigration when he speaks of the passage of somebody’s grandmother into an animal. But the soul, the psychic being, once having reached the human consciousness cannot go back to the inferior animal consciousness any more than it can go back into a tree or an ephemeral insect. What is true is that some part of the vital energy or the formed instrumental consciousness or nature can and very frequently does so, if it is strongly attached to anything in the earth life. This may account for some cases of immediate rebirth with full memory in human forms also. Ordinarily, it is only by Yogic development or by clairvoyance that the exact memory of past lives can be brought back.

Communications with the Dead in Spiritualist Seances

THE psychic does not give up the mental and other sheaths (apart from the physical) immediately at death. It is said that it takes three years on the whole to get clear away from the zone of communicability with the earth—though there may be cases of slower or quicker passage. The psychic world does not communicate with earth—at any rate, not in that way. And the ghost or spirit who turns up at seances is not the psychic being. What comes through the medium is a mixture of the medium's subconscious (using subconscious in the ordinary, not in the Yogic sense) and that of the sitters, vital sheaths left by the departed or perhaps occupied or used by some spirit or some vital being, the departed himself in his vital sheath or else something assumed for the occasion (but it is the vital part that communicates), elementals, spirits of the lowest vital physical world near earth, etc. etc. A horrible confusion for the most part—a hotch-potch of all sorts of things coming through a medium of “astral” grey light and shadow. Many communicants seem to be people who have just gone across into a subtle world where they feel surrounded by an improved edition of the earthly life and think that that is the real and definitive other world after earth—but it is a mere optimistic

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prolongation of the ideas and images and associations of the human plane. Hence the next world as depicted by the spiritualist "guides" and other seance communicants.

September, 1936

Automatic Writings and Seances

AUTOMATIC writings and spiritualistic seances are a very mixed affair. Part comes from the subconscious mind of the medium and part from that of the sitters. But it is not true that all can be accounted for by a dramatising imagination and memory. Sometimes there are things none present could know or remember; sometimes even, though that is rare, glimpses of the future. But usually these seances etc. put one into *rapport* with a very low world of vital beings and forces, themselves obscure, incoherent or tricky and it is dangerous to associate with them or to undergo any influence. Ouspensky and others must have gone through these experiments with too "mathematical" a mind, which was no doubt their safeguard but prevented them from

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coming to anything more than a surface intellectual view of their significance.

10-11-1935

Ghosts

WHAT do you mean by a ghost? The word "ghost" as used in popular parlance covers an enormous number of distinct phenomena which have no necessary connection with each other. To name a few only:—

(1) An actual contact with the soul of a human being in its subtle body and transcribed to our mind by the appearance of an image or the hearing of a voice.

(2) A mental formation stamped by the thoughts and feelings of a departed human being on the atmosphere of a place or locality, wandering about there or repeating itself, till that formation either exhausts itself or is dissolved by one means or another. This is the explanation of such phenomena as the haunted house in which the scenes attending or surrounding or preceding a murder are repeated over and over again and many other similar phenomena.

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(3) A being of the lower vital planes who has assumed the discarded vital sheath of a departed human being or a fragment of his vital personality and appears and acts in the form and perhaps with the surface thoughts and memories of that person.

(4) A being of the lower vital plane who by the medium of a living human being or by some other means or agency is able to materialise itself sufficiently so as to appear and act in a visible form or speak with an audible voice or, without so appearing, to move about material things, e.g., furniture or to materialise objects or to shift them from place to place. This accounts for what are called *poltergeists*, phenomena of stone-throwing, tree-inhabiting *bhutas*, and other well-known phenomena.

(5) Apparitions which are the formations of one's own mind and take to the senses an objective appearance.

(6) Temporary possession of people by vital beings who sometimes pretend to be departed relatives etc.

(7) Thought-images of themselves projected, often by people at the moment of death, which appear at that time or a few hours afterwards to their friends or relatives.

You will see that in only one of these cases, the first, can a soul be posited and there no difficulty arises.

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After-Death Connections

It is a very intricate and difficult question to tackle and it can hardly be answered in a few words. Moreover, it is impossible to give a general rule as to why there are these close inner contacts followed by a physical separation through death—in each case there is a difference and one would have to know the persons and be familiar with their soul history to tell what was behind their meeting and separation. In a general way, a life is only one brief episode in a long history of spiritual evolution in which the soul follows the curve of the line set for the earth, passing through many lives to complete it. It is an evolution out of material inconscience to consciousness and towards the Divine Consciousness, from Ignorance to divine Knowledge, from darkness through half-light to Light, from death to Immortality, from suffering to the Divine Bliss. Suffering is due first to the Ignorance, secondly to the separation of the individual consciousness from the Divine Consciousness and Being, a separation created by the Ignorance—when that ceases, when one lives in the Divine and no more in one's separated smaller self, then only suffering can altogether cease. Each soul follows its own line and these lines meet, journey together for a space, then part to meet again perhaps hereafter

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—they meet once more to help each other on the journey in one way or another. As for the after-death period, the soul passes into other planes of existence, staying there for a while till it reaches its place of rest where it remains until it is ready for another terrestrial existence. This is the general law, but for the connections of embodied souls, that is a matter of personal evolution of the two on which nothing general can be said, as it is intimate to the soul stories of the two and needs a personal knowledge. That is all I can say, but I don't know that it will be of much help to her as these things are helpful usually only when one enters into the consciousness in which they become not mere ideas but realities. Then one grieves no longer because one has entered into the Truth and the Truth brings calm and peace.

27-6-1936

The Meaning of Soul-experiences in Successive Lives

EACH person follows in the world his own line of destiny which is determined by his own nature

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and actions—the meaning and necessity of what happens in a particular life cannot be understood except in the light of the whole course of many lives. But this can be seen by those who can get beyond the ordinary mind and feelings and see things as a whole, that even errors, misfortunes, calamities are steps in the journey,—the soul gathering experience as it passes through and beyond them until it is ripe for the transition which will carry it beyond these things to a higher consciousness and higher life. When one comes to that line of crossing, one has to leave behind one the old mind and feelings. One looks then on those who are still fixed in the pleasures and sorrows of the ordinary world with sympathy and wherever it is possible with spiritual helpfulness, but no longer with attachment. One learns that they are being led through all their stumblings and trusts to the Universal Power that is watching and supporting their existence to do for them whatever for them is the best. But the one thing that is really important for us is to get into the greater Light and the Divine Union,—to turn to the Divine alone, to put our trust there alone whether for ourselves or for others.

27-2-1937

Attitude of the Spiritual Seeker towards Death

(1)

I CAN understand the shock your wife's catastrophic death must have been to you. But you are now a seeker and sadhak of the Truth and must set your mind to rise above the normal reactions of the human being and see things in a larger greater light. Regard your lost wife as a soul that was progressing through the vicissitudes of the life of Ignorance—like all others here; in that progress things happen that seem unfortunate to the human mind and a sudden accidental or violent death cutting short prematurely this always brief spell of terrestrial experience we call life seems to it especially painful and unfortunate. But one who gets behind the outward view knows that all that happens in the progress of the soul has its meaning, its necessity, its place in the series of experiences which are leading it towards the turning-point where one can pass from the Ignorance to the Light. He knows that whatever happens in the Divine Providence is for the best, even though it may seem to the mind otherwise. Look on your wife as a soul that has passed the barrier between two states of existence. Help her journey towards

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her place of rest by calm thoughts and the call to the Divine Help to aid her upon it. Grief too long continued does not help but delays the journey of the departed soul. Do not brood on your loss, but think only of her spiritual welfare.

15-9-1936

(2)

What has happened must now be accepted calmly as the thing decreed and best for his soul's progress from life to life, though not the best in human eyes which look only at the present and at outside appearance. For the spiritual seeker death is only a passage from one form of life to another, and none is dead but only departed. Look at it as that and shaking from you all reactions of vital grief,—that cannot help him in his journey,—pursue steadfastly the path to the Divine.

SECTION SIXTEEN

**ASTROLOGY AND PROPHECY,
SCIENCE & SPIRITUALITY,
ACTION OF SUBTLE FORCES,
VIOLENCE & NON-VIOLENCE,
ETC.**

*Observations on Cheiro's Predictions—
Astrology and Prophecy ;
Fate and Free-Will*

(1)

YOUR extracts taken by themselves are very impressive, but when one reads the book, the impression made diminishes and fades away. You have quoted Cheiro's successes, but what about his failures? I have looked at the book and was rather staggered by the number of prophecies that have failed to come off. You can't deduce from a small number of predictions, however accurate, that all is predestined down to your putting the questions in the letter and my answer. It may be, but the evidence is not sufficient to prove it. What is evident is that there is an element of the predictable, predictable accurately and in detail as well as in large points, in the course of events. But that was already known; it leaves the question still unsolved whether all is predictable, whether destiny is the sole factor in existence or there

are other factors also that can modify destiny,—or, destiny being given, there are not different sources or powers or planes of destiny and we can modify the one with which we started by calling in another destiny, source, power or plane and making it active in our life. Metaphysical questions are not so simple that they can be trenchantly solved either in one sense or in another contradictory to it—that is the popular way of settling things but it is quite summary and inconclusive. All is free-will or else all is destiny—it is not so simple as that. This question of free-will or determination is the most knotty of all metaphysical questions and nobody has been able to solve it—for a good reason that both destiny and will exist and even a free-will exists somewhere; the difficulty is only how to get at it and make it effective.

Astrology? Many astrological predictions come true, quite a mass of them, if one takes all together. But it does not follow that the stars rule our destiny; the stars merely record a destiny that has been already formed, they are a hieroglyph, not a Force,—or if their action constitutes a force, it is a transmitting energy, not an originating Power. Someone is there who has determined or something is there which is Fate, let us say; the stars are only indications. The astrologers themselves say that there are two forces, *daiva* and *purushakara*, fate and individual

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energy, and the individual energy can modify and even frustrate fate. Moreover, the stars often indicate several fate-possibilities; for example that one may die in mid-age, but that if that determination can be overcome, one can live to a predictable old age. Finally, cases are seen in which the predictions of the horoscope fulfil themselves with great accuracy up to a certain age, then apply no more. This often happens when the subject turns away from the ordinary to the spiritual life. If the turn is very radical, the cessation of predictability may be immediate; otherwise certain results may still last on for a time, but there is no longer the same inevitability. This would seem to show that there is or can be a higher power or higher plane or higher source of spiritual destiny which can, if its hour has come, override the lower power, lower plane or lower source of vital and material fate of which the stars are indicators. I say vital because character can also be indicated from the horoscope much more completely and satisfactorily than the events of the life.

The Indian explanation of fate is *Karma*. We ourselves are our own fate through our actions, but the fate created by us binds us; for what we have sown, we must reap in this life or another. Still, we are creating our fate for the future even while undergoing old fate from the past in the present. That

gives a meaning to our will and action and does not, as European critics wrongly believe, constitute a rigid and sterilising fatalism. But again, our will and action can often annul or modify even the past *karma*, it is only certain strong effects, called *utkat karma*, that are non-modifiable. Here too the achievement of the spiritual consciousness and life is supposed to annul or give the power to annul *karma*. For we enter into union with the Will Divine, cosmic or transcendent, which can annul what it had created, the narrow fixed lines disappear, there is a more plastic freedom and wideness. Neither Karma nor Astrology therefore point to a rigid and forever immutable fate.

As for prophecy, I have never met or known of a prophet, however reputed, who was infallible. Some of their predictions come true to the letter, others do not,—they half-fulfil or misfire entirely. It does not follow that the power of prophecy is unreal or the accurate predictions can be all explained by probability, chance, coincidence. The nature and number of those that cannot is too great. The variability of fulfilment may be explained either by an imperfect power in the prophet sometimes active, sometimes failing or by the fact that things are predictable in part only, they are determined in part only or else by different factors or lines of power,

different series of potentials and actuals. So long as one is in touch with one line, one predicts accurately, otherwise not—or if the lines of power change, one's prophecy also goes off the rails. All the same, one may say, there must be, if things are predictable at all, some power or plane through which or on which all is foreseeable; if there is a divine Omniscience and Omnipotence, it must be so. Even then what is foreseen has to be worked out, actually is worked out by a play of forces,—spiritual, mental, vital and physical forces—and in that plane of forces there is no absolute rigidity discoverable. Personal will or endeavour is one of those forces. Napoleon when asked why he believed in Fate, yet was always planning and acting, answered, "Because it is fated that I should work and plan;" in other words, his planning and acting were part of Fate, contributed to the results Fate had in view. Even if I foresee an adverse result I must work for the one that I consider should be; for it keeps alive the force, the principle of Truth which I serve and gives it a possibility to triumph hereafter so that it becomes part of the working of the future favourable Fate, even if the fate of the hour is adverse. Men do not abandon a cause because they have seen it fail or foresee its failure; and they are spiritually right in their stubborn perseverance. Moreover, we do not live for

outward result alone; far more the object of life is the growth of the soul, not outward success of the hour or even of the near future. The soul can grow against or even by a material destiny that is adverse.

Finally, even if all is determined, why say that life is, in Shakespeare's phrase or rather Macbeth's, "a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury, signifying nothing?" Life would rather be that if it were all chance and random incertitude. But if it is something foreseen, planned in every detail, does it not rather mean that Life does signify something, that there must be a secret Purpose that is being worked up to, powerfully, persistently, through the ages, and ourselves are a part of it and fellow-workers in the fulfilment of that invincible Purpose?

17-12-1936

P.S. Well, one of the greatest ecstasies possible is to feel oneself carried by the Divine, not by the stars or Karma, for the latter is a bad business, dry and uncomfortable—like being turned on a machine "*yantrarudhani mayaya*."

18-12-1936

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(2)

I am afraid I have no great confidence in Cheiro's ideas and prophecies—some prophecies are fulfilled but most have gone wrong. The idea about the Jews is an old Jewish and Christian belief; not much faith can be put in it. As for the numbers, it is true that according to occult science numbers have a mystic meaning. It is also true that there are periods and cycles in life as well as in world-life. But too exact a meaning cannot always be put in these things.

28-12-1936

Predetermination, Play of Forces and Chance

I HAVE not said that everything is predetermined. Play of forces does not mean that. What I said was that behind visible events in the world there is always a mass of invisible forces at work unknown to the outward minds of men, and by Yoga, (by going inward and establishing a conscious connection with the Cosmic Self and Force and forces), one can become conscious of these forces, intervene

consciously in the play, and to some extent at least determine things in the result of the play. All that has nothing to do with predetermination. On the contrary, one watches how things develop and gives a push here and a push there when possible or when needed. There is nothing in all that to contradict the dictum of the great scientist Sir C. V. Raman. Raman said once that all these scientific discoveries are only games of chance. Only, when he says that scientific discoveries are games of chance, he is merely saying that human beings don't know how it works out. It is not rigid predetermination, but it is not a blind unconscious Chance either. It is a play in which there is a working out of the possibilities in Time.

Comments on Max Planck's Views on Free-will

It is difficult indeed to make out what Planck means in these pages—what is his conclusion and how he arrives at it; he has probably so condensed his arguments that the necessary explanatory links are missing. The free-will affair, I see by glancing through the previous pages, arises only incidentally from his position that the new discoveries grouped

round the quantum theory do not make a radical difference in physics. If there is a tendency to regard laws as statistical,—in which case there is no “strict causality” and no determinism—still there is nothing to prove that they cannot be treated and may not be advantageously treated as dynamical also—in which case determinism can stand; the uncertainty of individual behaviour (electrons; quanta) does not really undermine determinism, but only brings a new feature into it. That seems from a hasty glance to be his position. Certain scientific thinkers consider this uncertainty of individual behaviour to be a physical factor correspondent to the element of free-will in individual human beings. It is here that Planck brings in the question of free-will to refute the conclusion that it affects strict causality and the law of determinism. His argument, as far as I can make it out, is this:-

(1) The law of strict causality stands because any given action or inner happening of the individual human being is an effect determined completely by two causes, (a) the previous state of his mind taken as a whole, (b) external influences.

(2) The will is a mental process completely determined by these two factors; therefore it is not free, it is part of the chain of strict causality—as are also, the results of the free-will.

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(3) What is important is not the actual freedom of the will, but the man's consciousness of freedom. This creates an inner experience of conscious motive which again creates fresh motives and so on indefinitely. For this reason it is impossible for a man to predict his future action—for at any moment a fresh motive may arise. But when we look back at the past, then the concatenation of cause and effect becomes apparent.

(4) The fact of strict causality (or at least the theory of it) stands therefore unshaken by the consciousness of free-will of the individual. It is only obscured by the fact that a man cannot predict his own actions or grasp the causes of his present state; but that is because here the subject and object are the same and this subject-object is in a state of constant alternative motion unlike an object outside, which is supposed not to change as a result of the inner movements of the knower.

There is a reference to causal law and ethical law which baffles me. Is the "ethical law" something outside the strict chain of effects and causes? Is there such a thing at all? If "strict causality" rules all, what is such an ethical law doing there?

That is the argument so far as I can follow it, but it does not seem to me very conclusive. If a man's conduct cannot be predicted by himself,

COMMENTS ON M. PLANCK'S VIEWS ON FREE-WILL

neither can it be predicted by anyone else, though here the subject and object are not the same; if not predictable, then it must be for the same reason, the element of free-will and the mobility created by the possible indefinite intrusion of fresh motives. If that is so, strict causality cannot be affirmed, —though a plastic causality in which the power of choice called by us free-will is an element (either as one among many contributory causes or as an instrument of a cause beyond itself) can still be asserted as possible.

The statement that the action of the individual is strictly determined by his total mental state plus external influences is doubtful and does not lead very far. It is possible to undermine the whole idea of inevitable causality by holding that the total existing state before a happening is only the condition under which it happens—there are a mass of antecedents and there is a sequent, if it may be so called, or a mass of sequences, but nothing proves that the latter are inevitable consequences of the mass of antecedents. Possibly, this total existing state is a matrix into which some seed of happening is thrown or becomes active, so that there may be many possible results, and in the case of human action it is conceivable that free-will is the or at least a determining factor.

I do not think therefore that these arguments of Planck carry us very far. There is also, of course, the question raised in the book itself whether, granting determinism, a local state of things is an independent field of causality or all is so bound together that it is the whole that determines the local result. A man's action then would be determined by part of the instrumentation of the Universal Force.

(2)

In the case of Socrates and that of the habitual drunkard raised by you, the difference you make is correct. The weak-willed man is governed by his vital and physical impulsions, his mental being is not dynamic enough to make its will prevail over them. His will is not "free" because it is not strong enough to be free, it is the slave of the forces that act on or in his vital and physical nature. In the case of Socrates the will is so far free that it stands above the play of these forces and he determines by his mental idea and resolve what he shall or shall not do. The question remains whether the will of Socrates is only free in this sense, itself being actually determined by something larger than the mentality of Socrates, something of which it is

the instrument—whether the Universal Force or a Being in him of which his daemon was the voice and which not only gave his mind that decisive awareness of the mental ideal but imposed on it the drive to act in obedience to the awareness. Or it may be subject to a nexus between the inner Purusha and the universal Force. In the latter case there would be an unstable balance between the determinism of Nature and a self-determination from within. If we start from the Sankhya view of things, that being (viz., the one of which his daemon was the voice) would be the soul or Purusha and both in the strong-willed Socrates and in the weak-willed slave of vital impulse, the action and its results would be determined by the assent or refusal of the Purusha. In the latter the Purusha gives its assent to and undergoes the play of the forces of Nature, the habit of the vital impulse, through a vital submission while the mind looks on helpless. In Socrates the Purusha has begun to emancipate itself and decide what it shall accept or shall not accept—the conscious being has begun to impose itself on the forces that act on it. This mastery has become so complete that he can largely determine his own actions and can even within certain limits not only forecast but fix the results—so that what he wants shall happen sooner or later.

As for the Superman, that is the conscious being whose emancipation is complete by his rising to a station beyond the limits of mind. He can determine his action in complete accord with an awareness which perceives all the forces acting in and on and around him and is able, instead of undergoing, to use them and even to determine.

Science and Spirituality

I do not think the two questions you put are of much importance from the view-point of spiritual sadhana.

1. The question about science and spirituality would have been of some moment some twenty years ago and it filled the minds of men in the earlier years of the twentieth century, but it is now out of date. Science itself has come to the conclusion that it cannot, as it once hoped, determine what is the truth of things or their real nature, or what is behind physical phenomena; it can only deal with the process of physical things and how they come about or on what lines men can deal with and make use of them. In other words, the field of physical science has been now definitely marked off and

limited and questions about God or the ultimate Reality or other metaphysical or spiritual problems are outside it. This is at least the case all over continental Europe and it is only in England and America that there is still some attempt to reason about these things on the basis of physical science.

The so-called sciences which deal with the mind and men (psychology, etc.) are so much dependent on physical science that they cannot go beyond narrow limits. If science is to turn her face towards the Divine, it must be a new science not yet developed which deals directly with the forces of the life-world and of Mind and so arrives at what is beyond Mind; but present-day science cannot do that.

2. From the spiritual point of view such temporary phenomena as the turn of the educated Hindus towards materialism is of little importance. There have always been periods when the mind of nations, continents or cultures turned towards materialism and away from all spiritual belief. Such periods came in Europe in the nineteenth century, but they are usually of short duration. Western Europe has already lost its faith in materialism and is seeking for something else, either turning back to old religions or groping for something new. Russia and Asia are now going through the same materialistic wave. These waves come because of a certain

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necessity in human development—to destroy the bondage of old forms and leave a field for new truth and new forms of truth and action in life as well as for what is behind life.

8-8-1935

Science, Metaphysics and Religion

I THINK A bases his ideas on the attempt of Jeans, Eddington and other English scientists to thrust metaphysical conclusions into scientific facts; it is necessary that he should appreciate fully the objections of more austere scientific minds to such a mixture. Moreover, spiritual seeking has its own accumulated knowledge which does not depend in the least on the theories or discoveries of science in the purely physical sphere. A's attempt like that of Jeans and others is a reaction against the illegitimate attempts of some scientific minds in the nineteenth century and of many others who took advantage of the march of scientific discovery to discredit or abolish as far as possible the religious spirit and to discredit also metaphysics as a cloudy verbiage, exalting science as the only clue to the

ACTION OF SUBTLE FORCES

truth of the universe. But I think that attitude is now dead or moribund; the scientists recognise, as you point out, the limits of their sphere. I may observe that the conflict between religion and science never arose in India (until the days of European education) because religion did not interfere with scientific discovery and scientists did not question religious or spiritual truth because the two things were kept on separate but not opposing lines.

18-11-1934

Action of Energies and Karma

ALL energies put into activity—thought, speech, feeling, act—go to constitute Karma. These things help to develop the nature in one direction or another, and the nature and its actions and reactions produce their consequences inward and outward: they also act on others and create movements in the general sum of forces which can return upon oneself sooner or later. Thoughts unexpressed can also go out as forces and produce their effects. It is a mistake to think that a thought or will can have effect only when it is expressed in speech or act: the unspoken thought, the unexpressed will

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are also active energies and can produce their own vibrations, effects or reactions.

Interchange of Vital Forces

WHEN one is with another for sometime talking etc., there is always some vital interchange, unless one rejects what comes from the others instinctively or deliberately. If one is impressionable, there may be a strong impression or influence from the other. Then when one goes to another person it is possible to pass it on to the other. That is a thing which is constantly happening. But this thing happens without the knowledge of the transmitter. When one is conscious, one can prevent it happening.

Action of Invisible Forces

CONCRETE? What do you mean by concrete? Spiritual force has its own concreteness; it can take a form (like a stream, for instance) of which one is aware and can send it quite concretely on whatever object one chooses.

ACTION OF SUBTLE FORCES

This is a statement of fact about the power inherent in spiritual consciousness. But there is also such a thing as a willed use of any subtle force—it may be spiritual, mental or vital—to secure a particular result at some point in the world. Just as there are waves of unseen physical forces (cosmic waves etc.) or currents of electricity, so there are mind-waves, thought-currents, waves of emotion,—for example, anger, sorrow, etc.—which go out and affect others without their knowing whence they come or that they come at all, they only feel the result. One who has the occult or inner senses awake can feel them coming and invading him. Influences good or bad can propagate themselves in that way; that can happen without intention and naturally, but also a deliberate use can be made of them. There can also be a purposeful generation of force, spiritual or other. There can be too the use of the effective will or idea acting directly without the aid of any outward action, speech or other instrumentation which is not concrete in that sense, but is all the same effective. These things are not imaginations or delusions or humbug, but true phenomena.

6-2-1943

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Use of Yogic Powers

It is certainly possible to have consciousness of things at a distance and to intervene.

The idea that Yogins do not or ought not to use these powers I regard as an ascetic superstition. I believe that all Yogins who have these powers do use them whenever they find that they are called on from within to do so. They may refrain if they think the use in a particular case is contrary to the Divine Will or see that preventing one evil may be opening the door to worse or for any other valid reason, but not from any general prohibitory rule. What is forbidden to anyone with a strong spiritual sense is to be a miracle-monger, performing extraordinary things for show, for gain, for fame, out of vanity or pride. It is forbidden to use powers from mere vital motives, to make an Asuric ostentation of them or to turn them into a support for arrogance, conceit, ambition or any other of the amiable weaknesses to which human nature is prone. It is because half-baked Yogins so often fall into these traps of the hostile forces that the use of Yogic powers is sometimes discouraged as harmful to the user.

But it is mostly people who live much in the vital that so fall; with a strong and free and calm

ACTION OF SUBTLE FORCES

mind and a psychic awake and alive, such pettinesses are not likely to occur. As for those who can live in the true Divine Consciousness, certain powers are not powers at all in that sense, not, that is to say, supernatural or abnormal, but rather their normal way of seeing and acting, part of the consciousness—and how can they be forbidden or refuse to act according to their consciousness and its nature?

I suppose I have had myself an even more completely European education than you, and I have had too my period of agnostic denial, but from the moment I looked at these things I could never take the attitude of doubt and disbelief which was for so long fashionable in Europe. Abnormal, otherwise supraphysical experiences and powers, occult or Yogic, have always seemed to me something perfectly natural and credible. Consciousness in its very nature could not be limited by the ordinary physical human-animal consciousness, it must have the other ranges. Yogic or occult powers are no more supernatural or incredible than is supernatural or incredible the power to write a great poem or compose great music; few people can do it, as things are,—not even one in a million; for poetry and music come from the inner being and to write or to compose true and great things one has to have the passage clear between the outer

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

mind and something in the inner being. That is why you got the poetic power as soon as you began Yoga,—Yogic force made the passage clear. It is the same with Yogic consciousness and its powers; the thing is to get the passage clear,—for they are already within you. Of course, the first thing is to believe, aspire and, with the true urge within, make the endeavour.

Healing by the Divine Force

To heal by the true, the divine force is obviously the best, provided the body is amenable. It has a consciousness of its own which must be enlightened before it gives a full response. Illness can certainly be acted upon and cured, only it is not always easy as there is much resistance in Matter, resistance of inertia. Much persistence is necessary. Gradually the control of the body or a particular illness becomes stronger. By practice you have to increase the power till it becomes able to cure. Note that so long as the power is not entirely there some aid of physical nature is not to be altogether neglected. The physical nature is a thing of habit. It is out of habit that it responds to the forces of illness.

ACTION OF SUBTLE FORCES

One has to get into it the contrary habit of responding to the divine forces only.

Action of Subtle Forces

(1)

THE fact that you don't feel a force does not prove that it is not there. The steam-engine does not feel a force moving it, but the force is there. A man is not a steam-engine? He is very little better, for he is conscious only of some bubbling on the surface which he calls 'himself' and is absolutely unconscious of all the subconscious, subliminal, superconscious forces moving him. (This is a fact which is being more and more established by modern psychology, though it has got hold only of the lower force and not the higher,—so you must not turn up your rational nose at it.) He twitters intellectually, foolishly about the surface results and attributes them all to his 'noble self', ignoring the fact that his noble self is hidden far away from his own view behind the veil of his dimly sparkling intellect and the reeking fog of his vital feelings, emotions, impulses, sensations and impressions

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So your argument is utterly absurd and futile. Our aim is to bring the secret forces out and un-walled into the open, so that instead of getting some shadows or lightnings of themselves out through the veil or being wholly obstructed, they may pour down and flow in rivers. But to expect that all at once is a presumptuous demand which shows an impatient ignorance and inexperience. If they begin to trickle at first, that is enough to justify the faith in a future downpour. You admit that you once or twice felt a force coming down; it proves that the force was and is there and at work and it is only your sweating Herculean labour that prevents you feeling it. Also, it is the trickle that gives the assurance of the possibility of the downpour. One has only to go on and by one's patience deserve the downpour or else, without deserving, slide on until one gets it. In Yoga the experience itself is a promise and foretaste but gets shut off till the nature is ready for the fulfilment. This is a phenomenon familiar to every Yogi when he looks back on his past experience. Such were the brief visitations of Ananda you had sometimes before. It does not matter if you have not a leech-like tenacity—leeches are not the only type of Yogis. If you can stick anyhow or get stuck, that is sufficient.

· ACTION OF SUBTLE FORCES ·

(2)

These things should not be spoken of but kept under a cover....Even in ordinary non-spiritual things the action of invisible or subjective forces is open to doubt and discussion in which there could be no material certitude, while the spiritual force is invisible in itself and also invisible in its action. So it is idle to try to prove that such and such a result was the effect of spiritual force. Each must form his own idea about that, for if it is accepted, it cannot be as a result of proof and argument, but only as a result of experience, of faith or of that insight in the deeper heart or the deeper intelligence which looks behind appearances and sees what is behind them. The spiritual consciousness does not claim in that way, it can state the truth about itself but not fight for a personal acceptance. A general and impersonal truth about spiritual force is another matter, but I doubt whether the time has come for it or whether it could be understood by mere reasoning intelligence.

December, 1935

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

The Role of Subliminal and Superconscious Forces

WHAT he has written about the subconscious and the outer nature is true. But the role of subliminal forces cannot be said to be small, since from there come all the greater aspirations, ideals, strivings towards a better self and better humanity without which man would be only a thinking animal—as also most of the art, philosophy, poetry, thirst for knowledge which relieve, if they do not yet dispel, the ignorance.

The role of the superconscious has been to evolve slowly the spiritual man out of the mental half-animal. That also cannot be called an insignificant role.

12-1-1937

The Thought Process

(1)

THE error comes from thinking that your thoughts are your own and that you are their maker and if you do not create thoughts (i.e. think), there will

ACTION OF SUBTLE FORCES.

be none. A little observation ought to show that you are not manufacturing your own thoughts, but rather thoughts occur in you. Thoughts are born, not made—like poets, according to the proverb. Of course, there is a sort of labour and effort when you try to produce or else to think on a certain subject, but that is a concentration for making thoughts come up, come in, come down, as the case may be, and fit themselves together. The idea that you are shaping the thoughts or fitting them together is an egoistic delusion. They are doing it themselves, or Nature is doing it for you, only under a certain compulsion; you have to beat her often in order to make her do it, and the beating is not always successful. But the mind or nature or mental energy—whatever you like to call it—does this in a certain way and carries on with a certain order of thoughts,—haphazard intelligentialities (excuse the barbarism) or asininites, rigidly ordered or imperfectly ordered intellectualities, logical sequences and logical inconsequences, etc., etc. How is an intuition to get in in the midst of that waltzing and colliding crowd? It does sometimes; in some minds often intuitions do come in, but immediately the ordinary thoughts surround it and eat it up alive, and then with some fragment of the murdered intuition shining through their non-intuitive stomachs

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they look up smiling at you and say, "I am an intuition, sir." But they are only intellect, intelligence or ordinary thought with part of a dismembered and therefore misleading intuition inside them. Now in a vacant mind, vacant but not inert, (that is important) intuitions have a chance of getting in alive and whole. But don't run away with the idea that all that comes into an empty mind will be intuitive. Anything, any blessed kind of idea can come in. One has to be vigilant and examine the credentials of the visitor. In other words, the mental being must be there, silent but vigilant, impartial but discriminating. That is, however, when you are in search of truth. For poetry, so much is not necessary. There it is only the poetic quality of the visitor that has to be scrutinised and that can be done after he has left his packet—by results.

22-10-1935

(2)

That is the way things come, only one does not notice. Thoughts, ideas, etc. are always wandering about (in thought-waves or otherwise), seeking a mind that may embody them. One mind takes,

ACTION OF SUBTLE FORCES

looks, rejects—another takes, looks, accepts. Two different minds catch the same thought-form or thought-wave, but the mental activities being different, make different results out of them. Or it comes to one and he does nothing, then it walks off saying, “O this unready animal!” and goes to another who promptly welcomes it and it settles into expression with a joyous bubble of inspiration, illumination or enthusiasm of original discovery or creation and the recipient cries proudly, “I, I have done this.” Ego, sir! ego! You are the recipient, the conditioning medium, if you like—nothing more.

(3)

First of all, these thought-waves, thought-seeds or thought-forms or whatever they are, are of different values and come from different planes of consciousness. The same thought-substance can take higher or lower vibrations according to the plane of consciousness through which the thoughts come in (e.g., thinking mind, vital mind, physical mind, subconscious mind) or the power of consciousness which catches them and pushes them into one man or another. Moreover, there is a stuff of mind in each man and the incoming thought uses that for shaping itself or translating itself (transcribing we usually

call it), but the stuff is finer or coarser, stronger or weaker, etc., etc. in one mind than in another. Also, there is a mind-energy actual or potential in each which differs and this mind-energy in its recipience of the thought can be luminous or obscure, sattwic, rajasic or tamasic with consequences that vary in each case.

Direct Knowledge of Persons

X HAS reported Mother's observation correctly but he does not seem to have understood it. The Mother never meant that by merely willing one could know at once what was in someone else or that all one's impressions about him would be spontaneously and infallibly correct. What she meant was that there is a faculty or power (an occult or Yogic faculty) by which one may get the right perceptions and impressions, and if one has the will to do so, one can develop it. Not at once, not by an easy method—*tra la la* and there you are: it may take years and one has to be careful and scrupulous about it. For these are intuitive perceptions and intuition is a thing that can easily be imitated by many other movements of consciousness that are much more

fallible. Your impressions may be mental or vital and a mental or vital impression may have something to justify it or may not—but even in the first case there is no certainty at all that it will be correct; even if it is the same thing, it may be incorrectly caught—or caught with much mixture of error, twisted into falsehood, put in the wrong way, etc. And there may be no justification at all; it may be a mere wrong formation of your own mind or vital or of somebody else's wrong impression conveyed to you and accepted by you as your own. Your impressions may be the result of a want of affinity between you and the person, so that if he impresses you as null and neutral, it is because you cannot feel what is in him, it does not come home to you or if you feel that he is in the wrong condition, it may be only because his vital intuitions rub yours the wrong way. There are lots of things like that which one must have the power to distinguish very carefully and exactly; until one knows one's own consciousness and its operations well, one cannot know the operations of the consciousness of others. But it is possible to develop a certain direct sight or a certain direct feeling or contact by which one can know, but only after much time and much careful, scrupulous and vigilant observation and self-training. Till then one can't go about saying that this is an

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

advanced sadhak or that one is not advanced and that other is no good at all. Even if one knows, it is not necessary always to air one's knowledge.

9-2-1935

Power of Gayatri

THE power of Gayatri is the divine Truth. It is a mantra of Knowledge.

Change of Religion

IF it is meant by the statement* that the form of religion is something permanent and unchangeable, then that cannot be accepted. But if religion here means one's way of communion with the Divine, then it is true that that is something belonging to the

* These comments are on the following statement of Mahatma Gandhi on Dr. Ambedkar's view about change of religion:—

“ But religion is not like a house or a cloak which can be changed at will. It is more an integral part of one's self than of one's body. Religion is the tie that binds one to one's creator, and while the body perishes as it has to, religion persists even after that.”

inner being and cannot be changed like a house or a cloak for the sake of some personal, social or worldly convenience. If a change is to be made, it can only be for an inner spiritual reason, because of some development from within. No one can be bound to any form of religion or any particular creed or system, but if he changes the one he has accepted for another, for external reasons, that means he has inwardly no religion at all and both his old and his new religion are only an empty formula. At bottom that is, I suppose, what the statement drives at. Preference for a different approach to the Truth or the desire of inner spiritual self-expression are not the motives of the recommendation of change to which objection is made here;—the object proposed is an enhancement of social status and consideration which is no more a spiritual motive than conversion for the sake of money or marriage. If a man has no religion in himself, he can change his credal profession for any motive; if he has, he cannot; he can only change it in response to an inner spiritual need. If a man has a bhakti for the Divine in the form of Krishna, he can't very well say, "I will scrap Krishna for Christ, so that I may become socially respectable."

19-10-1935

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Equality and Hierarchy of Castes

THE view taken by the Mahatma in these matters is Christian rather than Hindu—for the Christian, self-abasement, humility, the acceptance of a low status to serve humanity or the Divine are things which are highly spiritual and the noblest privilege of the soul. This view does not admit any hierarchy of castes; the Mahatma accepts castes but on the basis that all are equal before the Divine; a Bhangi doing his dharma is as good as the Brahmin doing his, there is division of function but no hierarchy of functions. That is one view of things and the hierarchic view is another, both having a standpoint and logic of their own which the mind takes as wholly valid but which only corresponds to a part of the reality. All kinds of work are equal before the Divine and all men have the same Brahman within them is one truth, but that development is not equal in all is another. The idea that it needs a special *punya* to be born as a Bhangi is, of course, one of those forceful exaggerations of an idea which are common with the Mahatma and impress greatly the mind of his hearers. The idea behind is that his function is an indispensable service to the society, quite as much as the Brahmin's, but, that being disagreeable, it

EQUALITY & HIERARCHY OF CASTES

would need a special moral heroism to choose it voluntarily and he thinks as if the soul freely chose it as such a heroic service and as reward of righteous acts—but that is hardly likely. The service of the scavenger is indispensable under certain conditions of society, it is one of those primary necessities without which society can hardly exist and the cultural development of which the Brahmin life is part could not have taken place. But obviously the cultural development is more valuable than the service of the physical needs for the progress of humanity as opposed to its first static condition, and that development can even lead to the minimising and perhaps the entire disappearance by scientific inventions of the need for the functions of the scavenger. But that, I suppose, the Mahatma would not approve of, as it would come by machinery and would be a departure from the simple life. In any case, it is not true that the Bhangi life is superior to the Brahmin life and the reward of a special righteousness. On the other hand, the traditional conception that a man is superior to others because he is born a Brahmin is not rational or justifiable. A spiritual or cultured man of pariah birth is superior in the divine values to an unspiritual and worldly-minded or a crude and uncultured Brahmin. Birth counts, but the basic value is in the man himself, in the soul behind,

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and the degree to which it manifests itself in his nature.

· 24-12-1936

Evolution beyond Knowledge

I do not know what Mahatma Gandhi means by complete realisation.* If he means a realisation with nothing more to realise, no farther development possible, then I agree—I have myself spoken of farther divine progression, an infinite development. But the question is not that: the question is whether the Ignorance can be transcended, whether a complete essential realisation turning the consciousness from darkness to light, from an instrument of the Ignorance seeking for Knowledge into an instrument or rather a manifestation of Knowledge proceeding to

* These observations are *apropos* of the following statement in an article by Mahatma Gandhi submitted by a sadhak to Sri Aurobindo for opinion:—

“I hold that a complete realisation is impossible in this embodied life. Nor is it necessary. A living immovable faith is all that is required for reaching the full spiritual height attainable by human beings.”

greater Knowledge, Light enlarging, heightening into greater Light, is or is not possible. My view is that this conversion is not only possible, but inevitable in the spiritual evolution of the being here. The embodiment of life has nothing to do with it. This embodiment is not of life, but of consciousness and its energy of which life is only one phase or force. As life has developed mind, and the embodiment has modified itself to suit this development (mind is precisely the main instrument of ignorance seeking for knowledge), so mind can develop Supermind which is in its nature knowledge not seeking for itself, but manifesting itself by its own automatic power, and the embodiment can again modify itself or be modified from above so as to suit this development. Faith is a necessary means for arriving at realisation, because we are ignorant and do not yet know that which we are seeking to realise; faith is indeed knowledge giving the ignorance an intimation of itself previous to its own manifestation, it is the gleam sent before by the yet unrisen Sun. When the Sun shall rise, there will be no longer any need of the gleam. The supramental knowledge supports itself. It does not need to be supported by faith; it lives by its own certitude. You may say that farther progression, farther development will need faith. No, for the farther development will proceed on a

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basis of Knowledge, not of Ignorance. We shall walk in the light of Knowledge towards its own wider vistas of self-fulfilment.

7-7-1936

Violence and Non-Violence

THERE is a truth in Ahimsa, there is a truth in destruction also. I do not teach that you should go on killing everybody every day as a spiritual dharma. I say that destruction can be done when it is part of the divine work commanded by the Divine. Non-violence is better than violence as a rule, and still sometimes violence may be the right thing. I consider *dharma* as relative; unity with the Divine and action from the Divine Will, the highest way. Buddha did not aim at action in the world but at cessation from the world-existence. For that he found the Eightfold Path a necessary preparatory discipline and so proclaimed it. It (Ahimsa) had nothing to do with the Yoga, but with the path towards liberation found by Buddha. There are many paths and all need not be one and the same in their teaching.

VIOLENCE AND NON-VIOLENCE

Destruction

DESTRUCTION in itself is neither good nor evil. It is a fact of Nature, a necessity in the play of forces, as things are in this world. The Light destroys the Darkness and the Powers of Darkness, and that is not a movement of Ignorance!

It all depends on the character of the destruction and the forces that enter into it. All dread of fire or other violent forces should be overcome. For dread shows a weakness—the free spirit can stand fearless before even the biggest forces of Nature.

13-1-1934

Samata and Fighting for the Divine

No doubt, hatred and cursing are not the proper attitude. It is true also that to look upon all things and all people with a calm and clear vision, to be uninvolved and impartial in one's judgments is a quite proper Yogic attitude. A condition of perfect *samata* can be established in which one sees all as equal, friends and enemies included, and is not disturbed by what men do or by what happens. The

question is whether ~~this~~ is all that is demanded from us. If so, then the general attitude will be of a neutral indifference to everything. But the Gita, which strongly insists on a perfect and absolute *samata*, goes on to say, "Fight, destroy the adversary, conquer." If there is no kind of general action wanted, no loyalty to Truth as against Falsehood except for one's personal sadhana, no will for the Truth to conquer, then the *samata* of indifference will suffice. But here there is a work to be done, a Truth to be established against which immense forces are arranged, invisible forces which can use visible things and persons and actions for their instruments. If one is among the disciples, the seekers of this Truth, one has to take sides for the Truth, to stand against the forces that attack it and seek to stifle it. Arjuna wanted not to stand for either side, to refuse any action of hostility even against assailants; Sri Krishna, who insisted so much on *samata*, strongly rebuked his attitude and insisted equally on his fighting the adversary. "Have *samata*", he said, "and seeing clearly the Truth, fight." Therefore to take sides with the Truth and to refuse to concede anything to the Falsehood that attacks, to be unflinchingly loyal and against the hostiles and the attackers, is not inconsistent with equality. It is personal and egoistic feeling that

VIOLENCE AND NON-VIOLENCE

has to be thrown away; hatred and vital ill-will have to be rejected. But loyalty and refusal to compromise with the assailants and the hostiles or to dally with their ideas and demands and say, "After all, we can compromise with what they ask from us," or to accept them as companions and our own people—these things have a great importance. If the attack were a physical menace to the work and the leaders and doers of the work, one would see this at once. But because the attack is of a subtler kind, can a passive attitude be right? It is a spiritual battle inward and outward; by neutrality and compromise or even passivity one may allow the enemy forces to pass and crush down the Truth and its children. If you look at it from this point, you will see that if the inner spiritual equality is right, the active loyalty and firm taking of sides is as right, and the two cannot be incompatible.

I have, of course, treated it as a general question apart from all particular cases or personal questions. It is a principle of action that has to be seen in its right light and proportions.

13-9-1936

Cause of Pain

PAIN is caused because the physical consciousness in the Ignorance is too limited to bear the touches that come upon it. Otherwise, to cosmic consciousness in its state of complete knowledge and complete experience all touches come as Ananda.

12-7-1934

Cause of Earthquakes

WHY should earthquakes occur by some wrong movement of man? When man was not there, did not earthquakes occur? If he were blotted out by poison gas or otherwise, would they cease? Earthquakes are a perturbation in Nature due to some pressure of forces; frequency of earthquakes may coincide with a violence of upheavals in human life but the upheavals of earth and human life are both results of a general clash or pressure of forces, one is not the cause of the other.

10-4-1934

SENSE OF HUMOUR

Sense of Humour

(1)

SENSE of humour? It is the salt of existence. Without it the world would have got utterly out of balance—it is unbalanced enough already—and rushed to blazes long ago.

(2)

I am not aware that highly evolved personalities have no sense of humour or how the person can be said to be integrated when this sense is lacking. "Looseness" applies only to a frivolous levity without any substance behind it. There is no law that wisdom should be something rigidly solemn and without a smile.

6-1-1937

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